TWO TRAGEDIES OF Mr. LEE, NAMELY THEODOSIUS AND OEDIPUS, WITH SOME ALTERATIONS

Submitted to the Reader.

MDCCLXXXVI.

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BRITISH MUSEUM
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A

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FEW ALTERATIONS

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WRITTEN BY

NATHANIEL LEE, Gent.

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OVID.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

Such Paſſages as are altered or omitted, are given at the Bottom of the Page as they ſtood in the Original.

CHARACTERS introduced in this DRAMA.

SCENE, CONSTANTINOPLE.

THEODOSIUS, Emperor of the Eaſt.

VARANES, Prince of Perſia.

ATHENAIS, an Athenian Maid, Daughter of Leontine.

MARCIAN, the General of Theodoſius's Armies.

PULCHERIA, Siſter to Theodoſius.

LEONTINE, formerly Præceptor to Theodoſius and Varanes.

JULIA, an Attendant of Pulcheria.

MARINA and FLAVILLA, Siſters to the Emperor, and newly profeſſed.

ATTICUS, the High-Prieſt, or Patriarch of Conſtantinople.

ARANTHES, a Friend and Companion to Varanes.

GUARDS, PRIESTS, &c.

THEODOSIUS.

ACT I.

SCENE, *a ſtately temple, which repreſents the Chriſtian religion, as in its firſt magnificence; being but lately eſtabliſhed at* Rome *and* Conſtantinople. *The ſide-ſcenes ſhew the horrid tortures with which the* Roman *tyrants perſecuted the church: And the flat ſcene, which is the limit of the proſpect, diſcovers an altar richly adorned; before it* Conſtantine, *ſuppoſed, kneels, with commanders about him, gazing at a bloody croſs in the air; which being encompaſſed with many angels, offers itſelf to view, with theſe words diſtinctly written;* In hoc ſigno vinces. *Inſtruments are heard, and many attendants: The miniſters at divine ſervice walk buſily up and down, till* Atticus, *the chief of all the prieſts, and ſucceſſor of St.* Chryſoſtom, *in rich robes, comes forward with the philoſopher* Leontine; *the waiters in ranks bowing all the way before him.*

Muſic is heard at a diſtance. *

Attic. O *Leontine!* was ever morn like this,
Since the celeſtial incarnation dawn'd?
I think no day, ſince that, ſuch glory gave
To chriſtian altars, as this morning brings.

Leon.

* A Chorus heard at a diſtance.

Prepare, prepare! the rites begin;
Let none unhallow'd enter in;
The temple with new glory ſhines;
Adorn the altars, waſh the ſhrines,
And purge the place from ſin.

Leon. Great ſucceſſor of holy *Chryſoſtom*,
Who now triumphs above a ſaint on high, *
Next in degree to thoſe bright ſons of Heav'n,
Who never fell, nor ſtain'd their orient beams.
What ſhall ~~I anſwer?~~ ~~How ſhall I approach you,~~
Since my converſion, which your breath inſpir'd?
Attic. To ſee this day, the Emperor of the eaſt
Leaves all the pleaſures that the earth can yield,
That nature can beſtow, or art invent;
In his life's ſpring, and bloom of gaudy years
Confin'd to narrow cells, and gloomy walks, †
Faſting and exerciſes of devotion,
Which from his bed at midnight muſt awake him,
To undergo the penance of a cloiſter;
Methinks, O *Leontine!* 'tis ſomething more
Than yet philoſophy could ever reach.
Leon. True, *Atticus*; you have amaz'd my reaſon.
Attic. Yet more. To our religion's laſting honour,
Mariana and *Flaville*, two young virgins,
Imperial born, caſt in the faireſt mould
That e'er the hands of nature form'd for woman, ‡
To-day, with *Theodoſius*, leave the world.
Leon. Methinks, at ſuch a glorious reſignation,
Th' angelic orders ſhould at once deſcend,
With charming voices and with lulling ſtrings,
To give full grace to ſuch triumphant zeal.
Attic. No, *Leontine*: I fear there is a fault;
For, when I laſt confeſs'd the Emperor,
Whether diſguſt and melancholy blood,

From

* Who now triumphs above a ſaint of honour.
† Confin'd to narrow rooms, and gloomy walks.
‡ That e'er the hands of beauty form'd for woman,
The mirrors of our court, where chaſtity
And innocence might copy ſpotleſs luſtre.

From reſtleſs paſſions, urg'd not this divorce;
He only anſwer'd me with ſighs and bluſhes.
'Tis ſure, his ſoul is of the tend'reſt make;
Therefore I'll tax him ſtrictly: but, my friend,
Why ſhould I give his character to you,
Who, when his father ſent him into *Perſia*,
Were by that mighty monarch then appointed
To breed him with his ſon, the prince *Varanes*?

Leon. And what will raiſe your admiration, is,
That two ſuch diff'rent tempers ſhould agree.
You know that *Theodoſius* is compos'd
Of all the ſoftneſs that ſhould make a woman:
Judgment, almoſt like fear, foreruns his actions;
And he will poiſe an injury ſo long,
As he had rather pardon than revenge it.
But the young *Perſian* prince, quite oppoſite,
So fiery fierce, that thoſe who view him nearly,
May ſee his haughty ſoul ſtill mounting in his face:
Yet did I ſtudy theſe ſo diff'rent tempers,
Till I at laſt had form'd a perfect union. *

Attic. I long to read
This gallant prince, who, as you have inform'd me,
Comes from his father's court to ſee our Emperor.

Leon. So he intended, till he came to *Athens*,
And at my homely board beheld my daughter;
Where, as fate order'd, ſhe, who never ſaw
The glories of a court, bred up to books
In cloſets, like a ſybil; ſhe, I ſay,
(Long ſince from *Perſia* brought by me to *Athens*)
Unſkill'd in charms, but thoſe which nature gave her,
Wounded this ſcornful prince. In ſhort, he forc'd me

To

* As if two ſouls did but inform one body:
A friendſhip that may challenge all the world,
And, at the proof, be matchleſs.

To wait him hither, with deep proteſtations,
That moment that bereſt him of the ſight
Of *Athenais*, gave him certain death.
But ſee my daughter honour'd with his preſence.

[*They retire.*

Enter VARANES *and* ATHENAIS.

Var. 'Tis ſtrange, O *Athenais!* wond'rous all!
Wond'rous the ſhrines, and wonderful the altars.
The martyrs, tho' but drawn in painted flames,
Amaze me with the image of their ſuff'rings:
Saints canoniz'd, that dar'd with *Roman* tyrants;
Hermits that liv'd in caves, and fed with angels.
By *Oroſmades*, it is wond'rous all!
That bloody croſs, in yonder azure ſky,
Above the head of kneeling *Conſtantine*,
Inſcrib'd about with golden characters,
Thou ſhalt o'ercome in this: If it be true,
I ſay again, by Heav'n, 'tis wond'rous ſtrange.

Athen. O prince! if thus imagination ſtirs you,
A fancy rais'd from figures in dead walls,
How would the ſacred breath of *Atticus*
Inſpire your breaſt, purge all your droſs away,
And drive this *Athenais* from your ſoul,
To make a virgin room, whom yet the mold
Of your rude fancy cannot comprehend.

Var. What ſays my fair! Drive *Athenais* from me!
Start me not into frenzy, leſt I rail
At all religion, and fall out with Heav'n.
And what is ſhe, alas! that would ſupplant thee:
Were ſhe the miſtreſs of the world, more fair *
Than winter ſtars, or ſummer-ſetting ſuns,
And thou ſet by in nature's plaineſt dreſs,

With

* Were ſhe the miſtreſs of the world, as fair
As winter ſtars, or ſummer-ſetting ſuns.

With that chaſte modeſt look, when firſt I ſaw thee
The heireſs of a poor philoſopher!
I ſwear, by all I wiſh, by all I love,
Glory and thee, I would not loſe a thought,
Nor caſt an eye that way, but ruſh to thee,
To theſe lov'd arms, and loſe myſelf for ever.

Athen. Forbear, my Lord.

Var. O cruel *Athenais!*
Why doſt thou put me off, who pine to death?
And thruſt me from thee, when I ſhould approach thee?
Can there be aught in this? Curſe then thy birth,
Thy glorious titles, and ill-ſuited greatneſs,
Since *Athenais* ſcorns thee: take again
Your ill-tim'd honours; take 'em, take 'em, gods!
And change me to ſome humble villager:
If ſo at laſt, for toils at ſcorching noon,
In mowing meadows, or in reaping fields,
At night ſhe will but greet me with a ſmile, *
Or reach the bounty of her hand to bleſs me.

Athen. When princes ſpeak, their ſubjects ſhould be mute. †
Yet, with humility, I would demand,
Wherein appears my ſcorn, or my averſion?
Have I not for your ſake abandon'd home,
Where I had vow'd to ſpend my calmer days?
But you, perhaps, imagine it but little
For a poor maid to follow you abroad,
Eſpecially the daughter of old *Leontine*;
Yet I muſt tell you, prince——

* At night ſhe will but crown me with a ſmile.

("Crown me with a ſmile" is a broken metaphor, to make uſe of an expreſſion uſed by Dr. Johnſon in his judicious remarks on a paſſage in one of Mr. Pope's Epitaphs.)

† *Mute* ſuits the metre of this line better, and is therefore ſubſtituted for *ſilent.*

Var. I cannot bear
Thoſe frowns: I have offended, but forgive me;
For who, O *Athenais!* that is toſs'd
With ſuch tempeſtuous tides of love as I,
Can ſteer a ſteady courſe? Retire, my fair.
[*Recorders flouriſh.*
Hark! the ſolemnities are now beginning,
And *Theodoſius* comes. Hide, hide thy charms;
If to his clouded eyes ſuch day ſhould break,
The royal youth, who doats to death for love,
I fear, would forfeit all his vows to Heav'n,
And fix upon thy world, thy world of beauty. [*Exeunt.*

Enter Theodoſius, *leading* Marina *and* Flavilla, *all three dreſſed in white, followed by* Pulcheria.

Theo. Farewell, *Pulcheria*; and, I pray, no more;
For all thy kind complaints are loſt upon me.
Have I not ſworn the world and I muſt part?
Fate has proclaim'd it: therefore weep no more;
Wound not the tend'reſt part of *Theodoſius*,
My yielding ſoul, that would expire in calms;
Wound me not with thy tears, and I will tell thee,
Yet, ere I take my laſt farewel for ever,
The cauſe of all my ſuff'rings: O my ſiſter!
A bleeding heart, the ſtings of pointed love,
What conſtitution, ſoft as mine, can bear?

Pulch. My lord, my emperor, my deareſt brother,
Why, all this while, did you conceal it from me?

Theo. Becauſe I was aſham'd to own my weakneſs:
I knew thy ſharper wit and ſtricter wiſdom
Would dart reproofs which I could not endure.
Draw near, O *Atticus!* and mark me well;
For never yet did my complaining ſpirit

Unlade

Unlade this weighty ſecret from my breaſt: *

Attic. Concealment was a fault; but ſpeak at large,
Make bare the wound, and I will pour in balm.

Theo. 'Tis folly all, and fondneſs—O remembrance!
Why doſt thou open thus my wound again,
And from my heart call down thoſe warmer drops
That make me die with ſhame? Hear, then, *Pulcheria*:
Some few preceding days before I left
The *Perſian* court, hunting one morning early,
I loſt myſelf and all the company,
Still wand'ring on, as fortune led my ſteps, †
Or chance directed, through the lonely ſcene,
When ſtrait, as if enchantment had been there,
Two charming voices drew me, till I came
Where divers arbours overlook'd a river.
Upon the oſier bank two women ſat,
Who, when their ſong was ended, talk'd to one,
Who bathing ſtood far in the cryſtal ſtream:
But, Oh, what thought can paint that fair perfection!
Not ſea-born *Venus*, in the courts beneath, ‡
When the green nymphs firſt kiſs'd her coral lips,
All poliſh'd, fair, and waſh'd with orient beauty,
Could, in my dazzl'd fancy, match her brightneſs.

Attic. Think where you are.

Theo. O, ſir, you muſt forgive me.

* Unlade this weighty ſecret on him,
Nor groan a ſyllable of her oppreſſion.

† Still wand'ring on, as fortune would direct me,
I paſt a rivulet, and lighted in
The ſweeteſt ſolitude I ever ſaw.

‡ Or give a glimpſe of ſuch a naked glory!

The chaſte enthuſiaſtic form appears
As when I ſaw her firſt—O *Atticus!* *
Forgive me——for my ſtory now is ended.
The nymph alarm'd—and her companions too,
Having deſcry'd me, ſhriek'd, and fled away,
Leaving me motionleſs, till *Leontine*,
Th' inſtructor of my youth, at length came in,
And wak'd me from the wonder that entranc'd me.

Attic. Behold, my lord, the man whom you have nam'd,
The harbinger of prince *Varanes* here.

Enter Leontine.

Theo. O *Leontine!* ten thouſand welcomes meet thee;
Thou foſter father of my tender youth,
Who rear'd the plant, and prun'd it with ſuch care;
How ſhall I look upon thee, who am fall'n
From all the principles of manlier reaſon,

By

* As when I ſaw her; yet, I ſwear, *Pulcheria*,
Had cold *Diana* been a looker on,
She muſt have prais'd the virtues of the virgin.
The ſatyrs could not gaze, for ſhe was veild
From her naked boſom,
Down to her knees, the nymph was wrapp'd in lawn:
But, Oh, for me, for me, that was too much!
Her legs, her arms, her hands, her neck, her breaſts,
So nicely ſhap'd, ſo matchleſs in their luſtre;
Such all-perfection, that I took whole draughts
Of killing love, and ever ſince have languiſh'd
With ling'ring ſurfeits of her fatal beauty:
Alas, too fatal ſure!——O *Atticus!*
Forgive me! for my ſtory now is done.
The nymph was dreſs'd, and with her two companions,
Having deſcry'd me, ſhriek'd, and fled away,
Leaving me motionleſs, till *Leontine*,
Th' inſtructor of my youth, by chance came in,
And wak'd me from the wonder that entranc'd me.

By thee infus'd, to more than woman's weakness!
Now, by the majesty divine, that awes
This sacred place, I swear, you must not kneel:
Inform me, for I have a thousand things
To ask thee, where, where is my godlike friend?
Is he arriv'd, and shall I see his face,
Before I'm cloister'd from the world for ever?

Leon. He comes, my lord, with all th' expecting joys
Of a young promis'd lover. From his eyes
Big hopes look forth, and boiling fancy forms
Nothing but *Theodosius* still before him;
His thought, his ev'ry word is *Theodosius*.

Theo. Yet *Leontine*, yet answer me once more:
With tremblings I demand it - - - -
Say—hast thou seen, Oh! has that heav'nly form
Appear'd to thee again?—Alas!——he's dumb.
Proceed, then, to the solemn last farewel;
Never was man so willing and prepar'd.

Enter Varanes, Aranthes, *and Attendants.*

Var. Where is my friend? O where is my belov'd,
My *Theodosius*? Point him out, ye gods! *

Theo. Thou mightiest pleasure,
And greatest blessing that kind Heav'n could send
To glad my parting soul, a thousand welcomes!
Oh, when I look on thee, new starts of glory
Spring in my breast, and with a sudden bound †
I run the race of lusty youth again.

Var. By Heav'n it joys me too, when I remember
Our thousand pastimes, when we borrow'd names.

Alcides,

* That I may press him dead betwixt my arms,
Devour him thus with over-hasty joy,
That languish at his breast, quite out of breath,
And cannot utter more.

† Spring in my breast, and with a backward bound

Alcides, I, and thou my dearest *Theseus*;
When thro' the woods we chas'd the foaming boar,
With hounds that open'd like *Thessalian* bulls,
Like tigers flu'd, and sanded as the shore,
With ears and chests that dash'd the morning dew;
Driv'n with the sport, as ships are toss'd in storms,
We ran like hinds, and matchless was our course:
Now sweeping o'er the limit of a hill;
Now with a full career came thund'ring down
The precipice, and sweat along the vale.

Theo. O glorious time! and when the gath'ring clouds
Have call'd us home, say, did we rest, my brother!
Then on the stage, to the admiring court,
We strove to represent *Alcides'* fury,
In all that raging heat, and pomp of madness,
With which the stately *Seneca* adorn'd him. *

Var. My *Theodosius* still; 'tis my lov'd brother!
And by the gods, we'll see those days again!
Why, then, has rumour wrong'd thee, that reported
Christian enthusiasm had charm'd thee from us;
That, drawn by priests, and work'd by melancholy,
Thou hast laid down the golden reins of empire,
And sworn thyself a votary for ever.

Theo. 'Tis almost true, and had not you arriv'd,
The solemn business had ere now been ended.
This I have made the empress of the east,
My elder sister; these with me retire,
Devoted to the pow'r whom we adore.

Var. What pow'r is that which merits such oblations?
I thought the sun more glorious and more great

Than

* So lively drawn, and painted with such horror,
That we were forc'd to give it o'er, so loud
The virgins shriek'd, so fast they dy'd away.

Than any that e'er mingled with the gods;
Yet ev'n to him, my father never offered
More than a hecatomb of bulls and horſes.
Now, by thoſe golden beams that glad the world,
I ſwear, it is too much; for one of theſe,
But half ſo bright, our god would drive no more;
He'd leave the darken'd globe, and in ſome cave
Enjoy ſuch charms for ever.

Attic. My lord, forbear;
Such language does not ſuit with our devotions.
Nothing prophane muſt dare to murmur here,
Nor ſtain the hallow'd beauties of the place.
Yet thus far we muſt yield, the emperor
Is not enough prepar'd to leave the world.

Var. Thus low, moſt rev'rend of this ſacred place,
I bow for pardon, and am half converted,
By your permiſſion, that my *Theodoſius*
Return to my embraces. O my brother!
Why doſt thou droop? There will be time enough
For pray'r and faſting, and religious vows;
Let us enjoy, while yet thou art my own,
All the magnificence of eaſtern courts.
I hate to walk a lazy life away:
Let's run the race which fate has ſet before us,
And poſt to the dark goal.

Theo. Cruel deſtiny!
Why too am I not thus? O my *Varanes!* *
Why do theſe ſounds of pleaſure ſtrike my ears?
Why are theſe joys brought to my ſick remembrance,
Who have no appetite; but am, to ſenſe,
From head to foot, all a dead palſy o'er?

Var.

* Why am not I thus too? O my *Varanes!*
Why are theſe coſtly diſhes ſet before me?

Var. Fear not, my friend, all ſhall be well again——*
For there are thouſand ways that yet are left
To raiſe thee up to pleaſure. We'll unlock
Our faſteſt ſecrets, ſhed upon each other
Our tendereſt cares, and quite unbar thoſe doors
Which ſhall be ſhut to all mankind beſide.

Attic. Silence and rev'rence are the temple's dues:
Therefore, while we purſue the ſacred rites,
Be theſe obſerv'd, or quit the awful place.
Imperial ſiſters, now twin-ſtars of Heav'n,
Anſwer the ſucceſſor of *Chryſoſtom*,
Without leaſt reſervation anſwer me,
By thoſe harmonious rules I charg'd ye learn.

Atticus *ſings.* †

Can you your coſtly robes forbear,
To live with us in coarſe attire?
Can you from courtly balls repair,
To ſing at midnight in our quire?

Chor.

* *Var.* Fear not, my friend, all ſhall be well
Again: for I have thouſand ways, and thouſand ſtories.

† Atticus *ſings.*

Atticus. Canſt thou, *Marina*, leave the world,
The world that is devotion's bane:
Where crowns are toſt, and ſceptres hurl'd,
Where luſt and proud ambition reign?

2. *Prieſt.* Can you your coſtly robes forbear,
To live with us in poor attire?
Can you from courts to cells repair
To ſing at midnight in our choir?

3 *Prieſt.* Can you forget your golden beds,
Where you might ſleep beyond the morn,
On mats to lay your royal heads,
And have their beauteous treſſes ſhorn?

Atticus. Can you reſolve to faſt all day,
And weep and groan to be forgiven?
Can you in broken ſlumbers pray,
And by affliction merit heaven?

Chor. Say, votaries, can this be done?
While we the grace divine implore,
The world has loſt, the battle's won,
And ſin ſhall never charm ye more.

Marina ſings. The gate to bliſs does open ſtand,
And all my penance is in view;
The world, with ſtore of joys in hand, ‡
Still whiſpers—Oh!—not yet adieu!

Flavilla ſings. If ought that's vain my ſoul poſſeſs,
Or other object govern here,
But ſuch as Heav'n itſelf may bleſs,
O may I never enter there!

‡ *Marina ſings.* The world upon the other hand,
Cries out, Oh, do not bid adieu!

Yet, ſacred Sirs, in theſe extremes,
Where pomp and pride their glories tell;
Where youth and beauty are the themes,
And plead their moving cauſe ſo well;

If aught that's vain my thoughts poſſeſs,
Or any paſſions govern here,
But what divinity may bleſs;
O may I never enter there!

Flavilla ſings. What, what can pomp or glory do?
Or what can human charms perſuade?
That mind that has a heav'n in view,
How can it be by earth betray'd?

No monarch, full of youth and fame,
The joy of eyes and nature's pride,
Should once my thoughts from heaven reclaim,
Though now he woo'd me for his bride.

Marina. No monarch bleſs'd with wealth and fame,
The joy of earth and nature's pride,
Should once my thoughts from Heav'n reclaim,
Though now he woo'd me for his bride.

Haſte then, Oh haſte, and take us in,
For ever lock Religion's door;
Secure us from the charms of ſin,
And let us ſee the world no more.

Atticus ſings. Hark! hark! behold the heav'nly choir;
They cleave the air in bright attire;
And ſee his lute each angel brings,
And, hark! divinely thus he ſings:
To the powers divine all glory be given,
By men upon earth, and angels in heaven.

[*Scene ſhuts, and all the Prieſts, with* Marina *and* Flavilla *diſappear.*

Pulch. For ever gone! for ever parted from me!
O *Theodoſius!* till this cruel moment
I never knew how tenderly I lov'd 'em;
But on this everlaſting ſeparation,
Methinks my ſoul has left me, and my time
Of diſſolution points me to the grave.

Theo. O my *Varanes!* does not now thy temper
Abate its wonted fire? Doſt thou not melt *
In mere compaſſion to my ſiſter's fate,
And cool thyſelf with one relenting thought?

Var. Yes, my dar'd ſoul rolls inward; melancholy,
Which I ne'er felt before, now comes upon me,
And I begin to loath all human greatneſs.

Our

* Bate ſomething of its fire? Doſt thou not melt.

Our eaſtern kings *
But know from maps the kingdoms that they ſway,
And in ſtate priſons doze their lives away,
Unnerv'd by pleaſures, to diſguſt a prey.
Let us, my friend, from tyrant cuſtoms free,
Eſcape abroad, and human manners ſee;
Obſerve mankind, and earth's ſtupendous frame,
Where climate changing, nature's ſtill the ſame:
She knows no high, no low of human race,
But deals her gifts around with equal grace:
Thoſe vain diſtinctions here, 'twixt man and man,
Aroſe from pride, that broke the ſimple plan.

END of ACT the Firſt.

* Oh, ſigh not then, nor thy hard fate deplore,
For 'tis reſolv'd we will be kings no more;
We'll fly all courts, and love ſhall be our guide:
Love, that's more worth than all the world beſide.
Princes are barr'd the liberty to roam;
The fetter'd mind ſtill languiſhes at home;
In golden bands ſhe treads the thoughtful round
Buſ'neſs and cares eternally abound.
And when for air the goddeſs would unbind,
She's clogg'd with ſceptres, and to crowns confin'd.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT II.

SCENE, *the Palace.*

Enter Pulcheria, Julia, *and Attendants.*

Pulch. THESE packets for the emperor *Honorius*:
Be swift, let th' agent haste to *Rome*.
I hear, my *Julia*, that our general
Is from the *Goths* return'd with conquest home.

Jul. He is. To-day I saw him in the presence,
Sharp to the courtiers, as he ever was,
Because they went not with him to the wars:
To you he bows, and sues to kiss your hand.

Pulch. He shall, my dearest *Julia*: oft I've told thee
The secret of my soul: if e'er I marry,
Marcian's my husband; he's a man, my *Julia*,
Whom I have studied long, and found him perfect;
Old *Rome*, at every glance, looks through his eyes,
And kindles the beholders. Some sharp atoms
Run through his frame, which I could wish were out:
He sickens at the softness of our court;*
Then sighs, comparing it with what *Rome* was.

Enter Marcian *and* Lucius.

Ha! who are these that dare prophane this place
With more than barb'rous insolence?

Marc. At your feet,
Behold, I cast the scourge of these offenders,
And kneel to kiss your hand.

Pulch.

* He sickens at the softness of the emperor,
And speaks too freely of our female court.

Pulch. Put up your ſword;
And, ere I bid you welcome from the wars,
Be ſure you clear your honour of this rudeneſs,
Or, *Marcian*, leave the court.

Marc. Thus, then, madam:
The emperor receiv'd me with affection,
Embrac'd me for my conqueſts, and retir'd;
When on a ſudden, all the gilded flies
That buz about the court, came flutt'ring round me; *
Whereon I drove 'em, madam, as you ſaw.
This is, in ſhort, the truth; I leave the judgment
To your own juſtice: if I have done ill,
Sentence me, and I'll leave the court for ever.

Pulch. Firſt, you are welcome, *Marcian*, from the wars;
And ſtill, whene'er occaſion calls for arms,
Heav'n ſend the emperor a general,
Renown'd as *Marcian!* As to what is paſt,
I think the world will rather praiſe than cenſure
Pulcheria, when ſhe pardons you the action.

Marc. Gods, gods, and thou great founder of old *Rome!*
What is become of all that mighty ſpirit,
That rais'd our empire to a pitch ſo high? †

Pulch.

* This, with affected cringes, and minc'd words,
Begs me to tell my tale of victories;
Which done, he thanks me, ſlips behind his fellow,
Whiſpers him in the ear, then ſmiles and liſtens,
While I relate my ſtory once again:
A third comes in, and aſks me the ſame favour;
Whereon they laugh, while, I ſtill ignorant,
Go on; but one behind more impudent,
Strikes on my ſhoulder; then they laugh'd out-right:
But then I, gueſſing the abuſe too late,
Return'd my knight behind a box o' th' ear;
Then drew, and briefly told them they were raſcals:
They laughing ſtill, cry'd out, The Gen'ral's muſty.

† Where is it pent? What but almighty power
Could thus confine it, that but ſome few atoms
Now run through all the Eaſt and Occident?

Pulch. Speak calmly, *Marcian*.

Marc. Who can be temperate,
That thinks as I do, madam? *
——— Yet ev'n this man, ‡
That fought so bravely in his country's cause,
Did I see wrong'd before the emperor,
Scorn'd and despis'd, because he could not cringe,
Nor plant his feet as some of them could do. †

Pulch.

* That thinks as I do, madam? Why, here's a fellow;
I have seen him fight against a troop of *Vandals*
In your defence, as if he lov'd to bleed:
Come to my arms, my dear! thou canst not talk,
But hast a soul above the proudest of 'em.
Oh, madam, when he has been all over blood,
And hack'd with wounds that seem'd to mouth his praises;
I've seen him smile still as he puff'd death from him,
And with his actions rally distant fate.

Pulch. He has a noble form.

‡ *Marc.* Yet ev'n this man,
That fought so bravely in his country's cause,
This excellent man, this morning, in the presence,

† One said his clothes were not well made, and damn'd
His taylor——Another said he look'd
As if he had not lost his maidenhead.
If things are suffer'd to be thus, down all
Authority, pre-eminence, degree, and virtue;
Let *Rome* be never mention'd; no, i' th' name
Of all the gods, be she forgotten ever!
Effeminate *Persians*, and the *Lydian* softness,
Make all your fights: *Marcian* shall out no more;
For, by my arms, it makes a woman of me,
And my swoll'n eyes run o'er, to think this worth,
This fuller honour than the whole court holds,
Should be ridiculous to knaves and fools;
Should starve for want of what is necessary
To life's convenience: when luxurious bawds
Are so o'ergrown with fat, and cramm'd with riot,
That they can hardly walk without an engine.

Pulch. Why did not you inform the empress?

Marc. Because he will not hear. Alas, good man,
He flies from this bad world; and still when wars
And dangers come, he runs to his devotions,
To your new thing, I know not what you call it,
Which *Constantine* began.

Pulch. How, are not you
Of that religion which the emp'ror owns?

Marc. No, madam; if you'll see my honest thought,
I am not of their principle that take
A wrong; so far from bearing with a foe,
I would strike first, like old *Rome*. I would forth;
Invade, enlarge my empire to the bounds
Of the too narrow universe. Yes, I own
That I despise your holy innovations.
I'm for the *Roman* gods, for funeral piles,
For mounting eagles, and the fancied greatness
Of our forefathers. Methinks my heated spirit
Could utter things worth losing of my head.

Pulch. Speak freely, *Marcian*, for I know thee honest.

Marc. O madam! long, long may the emp'ror live!
But I must say his gentle disposition
Suits not, alas! the oriental sway:
Bid him but look on *Pharamond*; O gods!
Awake him with the image of that spirit, *
Like the first *Cæsar* o'er the hardy *Gauls*,
He seems another thunder-bolt of war.

† Elbow the neighbouring nations round about. *Pulch.*

* Which like a pyramid revers'd, is grown
Ev'n from a point to the most dreadful greatness.
His very name already shakes the world,
And still in person heading his fierce squadrons.

Pulch. I oft have blam'd my brother most for this,
That to my hand he leaves the state affairs;
And how that sounds, you know——

Marc. Forgive me, madam;
I think that all the greatness of your sex,
Rome's *Clelia*, and the fam'd *Semiramis*,
With all the *Amazonian* valour too,
Meet in *Pulcheria*; yet, I say, forgive me,
If with reluctance I behold a woman
Sit at the empire's helm, and steer the world.

Pulch. I stand rebuk'd——

Marc. Mark but the growing *French*;
The most auspicious omen of their greatness
That I can guess, is their late Salique law,
Bless'd by their priests, the *Salii*, and pronounc'd
To stand for ever; which excludes all women
From the imperial crown. But, Oh! I speak
The least of all those infinite grievances,
Which make the subjects murmur: in the army,
Tho' I proceeded still like *Hannibal*,
And punish'd every mutineer with death;
Yet, Oh! it stabb'd me through and through the soul
To pass the wretches doom, because I knew
With justice they complain'd; for hard they fought,
And with their blood earn'd that forbidden bread,
Which some at court, and great ones, tho' unnam'd,
Cast to their hounds, while the poor soldiers starv'd——

Pulch. Your pity, too, in mournful fellowship,
No doubt might sooth their murmurs.

Marc. Yes, it did;

That

That I might put them once again in heart, *
I promis'd too, when we return'd to court,
Things ſhould be mended——
But how, O gods! (forgive my blood this tranſport)
To the eternal ſhame of female counſels,
And to the blaſt of *Theodoſius'* name,
(Whom never warlike chronicle ſhall mention) †
Were we receiv'd like undone prodigals,
By curs'd ungrateful ſtewards, with cold looks,
Who yet got all by thoſe poor wretches ruin! ‡
Madam, I've ſaid, perhaps, too much—if ſo—— §
Pulch. I've given you patient hearing, honeſt *Marcian*,
And, far as I can ſee into your temper, ‖
I think this ſeeming plain and honeſt *Marcian*,
An exquiſite and moſt notorious traitor.
Marc. Ha! traitor!
Pulch. Yes, a moſt notorious traitor.

* I ſaid 'twas true, the emp'ror was to blame,
Who dealt too coldly with his faithful ſervants,
And paid their great arrears by ſecond hand.

† (Oh let me ſpeak with a *Roman* ſpirit.)

‡ Like malefactors at the hands of juſtice.
I bluſh, I almoſt weep with burſting rage!
If thus receiv'd, how paid our long arrears?
Why, as entruſted miſers pay the rights
Of helpleſs widows, or the orphans' tears.
Oh, ſoldier! for to thee, to thee I ſpeak it,
Bawds for the drudgery of citizens wives,
Would better pay debilitated ſtallions.

§ It matters not; for he who lies, like me,
On the hard ground, is ſure to fall no further.

‖ I ſpeak my ſerious judgment in cold blood,
With ſtricteſt conſultation on the matter.

Marc. Your grandfather, whoſe frown could awe the world,
Would not have call'd me ſo——or if he had—— *

Pulch. Was't not enough, (O Heav'n, thou know'ſt too much!)
At firſt to own yourſelf an infidel,
A bold contemner, ev'n to blaſphemy,
Of that religion which we all profeſs,
For which your heart's beſt blood can ne'er ſuffice,
But you muſt dare, with a ſeditious army,
Thus to conſpire againſt the emperor?
I mention not your diſregard of me, †
Taxing the folly of my government, **
In terms no barb'rous *Vandal* would have us'd. ‡

Marc. You wreſt my honeſt meaning, by the gods— §

Pulch. I thought the meaning of all rational men
Should ſtill be gather'd out of their diſcourſe;
Nor are you ſo imprudent, without thinking,
To vent ſuch words, tho' now you fain would hide it. ‖
But think not you ſhall 'ſcape ſo eaſily:
Once more I do confront you as a traitor;
And, as I am entruſted with full pow'r,
Diveſt you, in the name of *Theodoſius*,
Of all your offices, commiſſions, honours;
Command you leave the court within three days,
Loyal, plain-dealing, honeſt *Marcian*.

Marc.

* *Pulch.* You would have taken it——but to the bus'neſs;

† I mention not your impudence to me.——

** Ev'n to my face; ſuch an irreverence.

‡ Beſide your libelling all the court, as if
You had engroſs'd the whole world's honeſty;
And flatt'rers, fools, and ſycophants, and knaves,
Such was your language, did inhabit there.

§ Yes, you do, and if you go on, I feel
My ſtruggling ſpirit will no longer bear it.

‖ You find the guilt, and baulk the accuſation.

Marc. Gods! gods! *

Pulch. If in three days—mark me—'tis I that doom thee,
Raſh, inconſiderate man, †
If after three days ſpace thou'rt found in court,
Thou dy'ſt; thy head, thy head ſhall pay the forfeit. ‡
Now, like a madman, rave; deplore thy fortune,
While pages laugh at thee. Then haſte to th' army,
Grow popular, and lead the multitude;
Preach up thy wrongs, and drive the giddy beaſt
To kick at *Cæſar*. Nay, if thou weep'ſt, I'm gone.
O *Julia!* if I ſtay, I ſhall weep too.
Yet 'tis but juſt that I the heart ſhould ſee
Of him who once muſt lord it over me. [*Aſide.*

[*Exeunt* Pulch. *and* Julia.

Luc. Why do you droop, ſir?—Come, no more o'this:
You are, and ſhall be ſtill our general.
Say but the word, I'll fill the *Hippodrome*
With ſquadrons that ſhall make the emp'ror tremble; §
Methinks, like *Junius Brutus*, I have watch'd
An opportunity, and now it comes——
Few words and I are friends; but, noble *Marcian*,
If yet thou art not more than general,
Ere dead of night, ſay *Lucius* is a coward.

Marc. I charge thee, in the name of all the gods,
Come back: I charge thee, by the name of friend.

* *Pulch.* What now; ha! does the traitor murmur?

† Raſh, inconſiderate man, a wretch beneath
The torments I could execute upon thee!

‡ Now rage, now rail, and curſe the court;
Saucily dare t'abuſe the beſt of princes,
And let thy lawleſs tongue laſh all it can.

§ We'll fire the court about his ears.

All's well, and I rejoice I am no general.
But, hush! within three days we must be gone:
And then, my friend, farewel to ceremony!
We'll fly to some far distant, lonely village,
Forget our former state, and herd * with slaves;
And when night comes,
With bodies coarsely fill'd, and vacant souls,
Sleep like the labour'd hinds, and never think;
For if I think again, I shall go mad.

Enter Leontine *and* Athenais.

Therefore, no thought. But see, we're interrupted,
O court! O emperor!—Yet let death threaten;
I'll find a time; 'till then, be still, my soul—— †
Loyal, plain-dealing, honest *Marcian*;
A slave, a traitor! O eternal gods!— [*Exeunt.*

Leon. So, *Athenais*, now our compliment
To the young *Persian* prince is at an end;
What then remains, but that we take our leave,
And bid him everlastingly farewel.

Athen. My lord!

Leon. I say that decency requires
We should be gone; nor can you stay with honour.

Athen. Most true, my lord.

Leon. The court is now at peace.
The emp'ror's sisters are retir'd for ever,
And he himself compos'd: what hinders then,
But that we bid adieu to prince *Varanes*?

Athen. Ah, sir! why will you break my heart?

Leon. I would not.
Thou art the only comfort of my age;

Like

* Breed is the word in the original.

† No gen'ral now i' a member of the country,
But most corrupt; therefore to be cut off.

Like an old tree, I ſtand amongſt the ſtorms;
Thou art the only limb that I have left me: [*She kneels.*
My dear green branch! And how I prize thee child,
Heav'n only knows. Why doſt thou kneel and weep?

Athen. Becauſe you are ſo good, and will, I hope,
Forgive my fault, who firſt occaſion'd it.

Leon. I charg'd thee to receive and hear the prince.

Athen. You did, and, O my lord, I heard too much,
Too much, I fear, for my eternal quiet!

Leon. Riſe, *Athenais*; credit him who bears
More years than thou: *Varanes* has deceiv'd thee.

Athen. How do we differ then? You judge the prince
Impious and baſe; while I take Heav'n to witneſs,
I think him the moſt virtuous of men:
Therefore, take heed, my lord, how you accuſe him
Before you make the trial. Oh, *Varanes!*
If thou art falſe, there's no ſuch thing on earth
As ſolid goodneſs, or ſubſtantial honour.
A thouſand times, my lord, he has ſworn to give me
(And I believe him too) his crown and empire,
That day I make him maſter of my heart.

Leon. That day he'll make thee miſtreſs of his power,
Which carries a foul name among the vulgar.
No, *Athenais*, let me ſee thee dead,
Borne a pale corpſe, and gently laid in earth;
So I may ſay, ſhe's chaſte, and dy'd a virgin,
Rather than view thee with theſe wounded eyes,
The blaſt of common tongues, the nobles ſcorn,
Thy father's curſe. †

Athen. O horrid ſuppoſition! ‡

Have

* Seated upon the throne of *Iſdigerdes*.

† Thy father's curſe; that is, the prince's whore.

‡ *Athen.* Oh horrid ſuppoſition! how I deteſt it!

Be

Have I for this, my lord, been taught by you
The niceſt honour, and ſevereſt virtue;
To fear no death, to know the ends of life,
And by long ſearch diſcern the higheſt good?
No, reverend *Leontine*, not to redeem
That aged head from the deſcending ax, *
Would I for empire, to the man I love
Be made the object of unlawful "paſſion." †

Leon. O greatly ſaid! ‡

Athen. Look down, ye pow'rs, take notice, we obey
The rigid principles you have infus'd;
Yet, O my noble father! to convince you,
Since you will have it ſo, propoſe a marriage;
Tho' with the thought I'm cover'd o'er with bluſhes;
Not that I doubt the prince: that were to doubt
The Heav'ns themſelves. I know he is all truth:
But modeſty——

The

Be witneſs Heav'n, that ſees my ſecret thoughts!
Have I for this, my Lord, been taught by you
The niceſt juſtice, and ſevereſt virtue;
To fear no death, to know no end of life,
And with long ſearch diſcern the higheſt good?
No, Athenais, when the day beholds thee
So ſcandalouſly rais'd, pride caſt thee down,
The ſcorn of honour and the people's prey!
No, cruel *Leontine*, not to redeem

* Not though I ſaw thy trembling body rack'd,
Thy wrinkles all about thee filled with blood.

† The word in the original is *pleaſure*, for which *paſſion* is here ſubſtituted.

‡ Oh greatly ſaid! and, by the blood which warms me,
Which runs as rich any as *Athens* holds,
It would improve the virtue of the world,
If ev'ry day a thouſand votaries,
And thouſand virgins, came from far to hear thee!

as

The virgin's troubleſome and conſtant gueſt,
That, that alone forbids——
Leon. I wiſh to Heav'n
There prove no greater bar to my relief.
Behold the prince. I will retire a while,
And, when occaſion calls, come to thy aid. [*Ex.* Leon.

Enter Varanes *and* Aranthes.

Var. To fix her on the throne, to me ſeems little.
Were I a god, I yet would raiſe her higher:
This is the nature of thy prince. But, Oh!
As to the world, thy judgment ſoars above me,
And I am dar'd with this gigantic honour;
Glory forbids her proſpect to a crown,
Nor muſt ſhe gaze that way: my haughty ſoul,
That day when ſhe aſcends the throne of *Cyrus*,
Will leave my body pale, and to the ſtars
Retire in bluſhes, and quite loſt for ever.
Aran. What do you purpoſe then?
Var. I know not what.
But ſee, ſhe comes, the glory of my arms,
The only bus'neſs of my inſtant thought,
My ſoul's beſt joy, and all my true repoſe.
I ſwear I cannot bear theſe ſtrong ‡ deſires,
Theſe ſtrong impulſes, which will ſhortly leave me
Dead at thy feet——
Athen. What have you found, my lord,
In me ſo harſh or cruel, that you fear
To ſpeak your griefs?
Var. Firſt, let me kneel and ſwear,
And on thy hand ſeal my religious vow;
Strait let the breath of gods blow me from earth,
Swept from the book of fame, forgotten ever,
If I prefer thee not, O *Athenais!*
To all the *Perſian* greatneſs.

Athen.

‡ Strange deſires.

Athen. I believe you;
For I have heard you ſwear as much before.

Var. Haſt thou? Oh, why then did I ſwear again?
But that my love knew nothing worthier of thee,
And could no better way expreſs my paſſion.

Athen. O riſe, my lord!——

Var. I will do every thing
Which *Athenais* bids: if there be more
In nature to convince her of my love,
Whiſper it, O ſome god! into my ear,
And on her breaſt, thus to her liſt'ning ſoul,
I'll breathe the inſpiration - - - - ſilent yet:
What but one ſigh——no more?——Can that ſuffice
For all my vaſt exceſs of prodigal love? *

Athen. Alas! my lord! ‡

Var. Thus to approach thee ſtill; thus to behold thee—
Yet there is more——

Athen. My lord, I dare not hear you. †

Var. Why doſt thou frown?——now whilſt I gaze upon thee,
"Till the ſenſe aches" ‖——yet is this beating heart
As full of honour as tranſporting paſſion.

Athen. I muſt not doubt you, ſir, but, Oh! I tremble
To think, If *Iſdigerdes* ſhould behold you,
Should hear you thus proteſting to a maid
Of no degree, but virtue, in the world——

Var.

* Oh, *Athenais*, what ſhall I ſay or do,
To gain the thing I wiſh?

‡ *Ath.* What's that, my lord?

† *Var.* Why doſt thou frown at what thou doſt not know?
'Tis an imagination which ne'er pierc'd thee;
Yet as 'tis miſſhing, 'tis full of honour.

‖ "Till the ſenſe aches," is an expreſſion borrowed from Shakeſpear in the 4th act of Othello.

——— Oh, thou weed!
Who art ſo lovely fair, and ſmell'ſt ſo ſweet,
That the ſenſe aches at thee———

Var. No more of this, no more; for I diſdain
All pomp when thou art by. Far be the noiſe
Of kings and courts from us, whoſe gentle ſouls
Our kinder ſtars have ſteer'd another way.
Free as the foreſt birds we'll pair together,
Without rememb'ring who our fathers were:
Fly to the arbours, grots, and flowery meads,
And in ſoft murmurs interchange our ſouls;
Together drink the chryſtal of the ſtream,
Or taſte the yellow fruit which autumn yields;
And when the golden ev'ning calls us home,
Wing to our downy neſt, and ſleep till morn.

Athen. Ah, prince, no more! forbear, forbear to charm me,
Since I am doom'd to leave you, ſir, for ever.

Var. Hold, *Athenais*——

Athen. I know your royal temper,
And that high honour reigns within your breaſt,
Which would diſdain to waſte ſo many hours
With one of humble blood compar'd to you;
Unleſs ſtrong paſſion ſway'd your thoughts to love her.
Therefore receive, O prince! and take it kindly,
For none on earth but you could win it from me,
Receive the gift of my eternal love:
'Tis all I can beſtow, nor is it little;
For ſure a heart ſo coldly chaſte as mine,
No charms but yours, my lord, could e'er have warm'd.

Var. Well have you made amends by this laſt comfort,
For the cold dart you ſhot at me before.
For this laſt goodneſs, O my *Athenais!*
(For now, methinks, I ought to call you mine)
I empty all my ſoul in thanks before you.
Yet, Oh, one fear remains! like death it chills me;

Why my relenting love did talk of parting!

Athen. Look there, and ceaſe your wonder: I have ſworn
T' obey my father, and he calls me hence——

Enter Leontine.

Var. Ha, *Leontine!* by which of all my actions
Have I ſo deeply injur'd thee, to merit
The ſmarteſt wound revenge could form to end me?

Leon. Anſwer me now, O prince! for virtue prompts me,
And honeſty will dally now no longer,
What can the end of all this paſſion be?
Glory requires the ſtrict account, and aſks
What you intend at laſt to *Athenais?*

Var. How, *Leontine!*

Leon. You ſaw her, ſir, at *Athens*, ſaid you lov'd her;
I charg'd her humbly to receive the honour,
And hear your paſſion. Has ſhe not obey'd me?

Var. She has; I thank the gods; but whither would'ſt thou?

Leon. Having reſolv'd to viſit *Theodoſius*,
You ſwore you would not go without my daughter,
Whereon I gave command that ſhe ſhould follow.

Var. Yes, *Leontine*, my old remembrancer,
Moſt learn'd of all philoſophers, you did.

Leon. Thus long ſhe has attended; you have ſeen her,
Sounded her virtues, and her imperfections;
Therefore, dread ſir, forgive this bolder charge
Which honour ſounds; and now let me demand you—

Var. Now help, *Aranthes*, or I'm daſh'd for ever.

Aranth. Whatever happens, ſir, diſdain the marriage.

Leon. Can your high thoughts ſo far forget themſelves,
T' admit this humble virgin for your bride?

Var. Ha!

Athen. He bluſhes, gods! and ſtammers at the queſtion!

Leon.

Leon. Why do you walk, and chafe yourſelf, my lord? *

Var. How—*Leontine*, your daughter for my bride? †
I know indeed that ſhe deſerves a crown;
Yet 'tis to reaſon much, though not to love.
And ſure the world would bluſh to ſee the daughter
Of a philoſopher on the throne of *Cyrus*.

Athen. Undone for ever!

Leon. Is this your anſwer, ſir?

Var. Why doſt thou urge me thus, and puſh me to
The very brink of glory? Where, alas!
I look, and tremble at the vaſt deſcent;
Yet, even there, to the vaſt bottom, down
My raſh adventurer, love would have me leap,
And graſp my *Athenais* with my ruin.

Leon. 'Tis well, my lord———

Var. Why doſt thou then provoke me!
I thought that *Perſia*'s court had ſtore of honour
To ſatisfy the height of thy ambition.
Beſides, old man, my love is too well grown,
To want a tutor for his good behaviour:
What he will do, he of himſelf will do,
And not be taught by you——

Leon. I know he will not;
Fond tears away! I know, I know he will not;
But he would buy, with his old man's preferment,
My daughter's ſhame.

Var. Away, I ſay! my ſoul diſdains the motion.

Leon. The motion of a marriage; yes, I ſee it:
Your angry looks, and haughty words, betray it;

* The buſineſs is not much.

† *Var.* How, *Leontine*?
Not much! I know that ſhe deſerves a crown.

I found it at the firſt. I thank you, ſir,
You have at laſt rewarded your old tutor
For all his cares, his watchings, ſervices;
Yet, let me tell you, ſir, this humble maid,
This daughter of a poor philoſopher,
Shall, if ſhe pleaſe, be ſeated on a throne
As high as that of the immortal *Cyrus*.

Var. I think that age and deep philoſophy
Have crack'd thy brain: Farewel old *Leontine*;
Retire to reſt; and when this brawling humour
Is rock'd aſleep, I'll meet my *Athenais*,
And clear the accounts of love, which thou haſt blotted.

[*Exit.*

Leon. Old *Leontine!* perhaps I'm mad indeed.
But hold, my heart, and let that ſolid virtue,
Which I ſo long ador'd, ſtill keep the reins.
O *Athenais!* But I will not chide thee:
Fate is in all our actions; and, methinks,
At leaſt a father judges ſo, it has
Rebuk'd thee ſmartly for thy eaſineſs:
There is a kind of mournful eloquence
In thy dumb grief, which ſhames all clam'rous ſorrow.

Athen. Alas, my breaſt is full of death; methinks
I fear ev'n you———

Leon. Why ſhouldſt thou fear thy father?

Athen. Becauſe you have the figure of a man!
Is there, O ſpeak, a poſſibility
To be forgiv'n?

Leon. Thy father does forgive thee,
And honour will; but on this hard condition,
Never to ſee him more———

Athen. See him! O Heavens!

Leon.

Leon. Unleſs it be, my daughter, to upbraid him:
Not though he ſhould repent, and ſtrait return,
Nay, proffer thee his crown——*

Athen. Oh, give me leave;
For yet I am all tenderneſs; the woman,
The weak, the mild, the fond, the coward woman,
Dares not look forth; but runs about my breaſt,
And viſits all the warmer manſions there,
Where ſhe ſo oft has harbour'd falſe *Varanes!*
Cruel *Varanes!* falſe, forſworn *Varanes!*

Leon. Is this forgetting him! Is this the courſe
Which honour bids thee take?

Athen. Ah, ſir, allow
A little time for love to make his way:
Hardly he won the place, and many ſighs,
And many tears, and thouſand oaths it coſt him.
And, Oh! I find he will not be diſlodg'd
Without a groan at parting hence for ever.
No, no! he vows he will not yet be 'ras'd
Without whole floods of grief at his farewel,
Which thus I ſacrifice: and, Oh! I ſwear,
Had he prov'd true, I would as eaſily
Have empty'd all my blood, and dy'd to ſerve him,
As now I ſhed theſe drops, and vent theſe ſighs,
To ſhew how well, how perfectly I lov'd him.

Leon. No woman, ſure, but thou, ſo low in fortune,
(Therefore the nobler is thy fair example)
Would thus have griev'd, becauſe a prince ador'd her:

Nor

* Nay, proffer thee his crown——No more of that.
Honour too cries, Revenge, revenge thy wrongs,
Revenge thyſelf, revenge thy injur'd father,
For 'tis revenge ſo wiſe, ſo glorious too,
As all the world ſhall praiſe——

Nor will it be believ'd in after-times.*
Yet do I ſtill adviſe, preſerve thy virtue;
And ſince he does diſdain thee for his bride,
Scorn thou to be——

Athen. Hold, ſir, Oh, hold, forbear;
For my nice ſoul abhors the very ſound:
Yet with the ſhame of that, and the deſire
Of an immortal name, I am inſpir'd!
All kinder thoughts are fled for ever from me;
All tenderneſs, as if I ne'er had lov'd,
Has left my boſom colder than the grave.

Leon. O *Athenais!* on; 'tis bright before thee,
Purſue the track, and thou ſhalt be a ſtar. †
Patterns like thine may guilty courts improve,
And teach the Fair to bluſh at conſcious love.

Exeunt.

END of ACT the Second.

* That there was ever ſuch a maid in being.

† See the concluding lines (but two) brought here, and transferred to *Leontine*, who with more propriety may give the encomium to *Athenais* than the young maiden herſelf.

Athen. Oh, *Leontine*, I ſwear, my noble father,
That I will ſtarve, ere once forego my virtue:
And thus let's join to contradict the world:
That empire could not tempt a poor old man
To ſell his prince the honour of his daughter;
And ſhe too match'd the ſpirit of her father;
Tho' humbly born, and yet more humbly bred,
She for her fame refus'd a royal bed;
Who, tho' ſhe lov'd, yet did put off the hour,
Nor could her virtue be betray'd by pow'r.
Patterns like theſe will guilty courts improve,
And teach the Fair to bluſh at conſcious love:
Then let all maids for honour come in view,
If any maid can more for glory do.

ACT III.

Enter Varanes *and* Aranthes.

Var. COME to my arms, my faithful, dear *Aranthes*,
Soft counſellor, companion of my youth;
If I had longer been alone, moſt ſure, *
My hand would have rebell'd againſt its maſter,
And done a murder here.

Aranth. The gods forbid!

Var. I ſwear I preſs thee with as hearty joy,
As ever fearful bride embrac'd her love,
When from a dream of death ſhe wak'd, and found
Her partner ſafe and ſleeping by her ſide.

Aranth. The cauſe, my lord?

Var. Early thou know'ſt laſt night I went to reſt:
But long, my friend, ere ſlumber clos'd my eyes,
Long was the combat fought 'twixt love and glory;
The fever of my paſſion burnt me up;
My pangs grew ſtronger, and my rack was doubled:
My bed was all afloat with the cold drops
That mortal pain wrung from my labouring limbs, †
Therefore I charge thee ſeek out *Athenais*;
Say, I will marry her now on the inſtant:
Say all that I would ſay; yet in the end
My love ſhall make it more than gods can utter.

Aranth. My Lord, both *Leontine* and ſhe are gone
From their apartment——

Var.

* With the diſtraction that ſurrounds my heart.

† My groans more deep than other's dying gaſps;
Therefore, I charge thee, haſte to her apartments;
I do conjure thee, tell her, tell her all
My fears can urge, or fondneſs can invent.
Tell her how I repent, ſay any thing;
For any thing I'll do to quench my fires.

Var. Ha! gone, ſay'ſt thou! whither?

Aranth. That was my whole employment all this day.
But, ſir, I grieve to ſpeak it, they have left
No track behind for care to find 'em out:
Nor is it poſſible——

Var. It is, it ſhall;
I'll ſtruggle with impoſſibilities
To find my *Athenais:* not the walls
Of *Athens*, nor of *Thebes*, ſhall hide her from me.
I'll bring the force of all my father's arms,
And lay 'em waſte, but I'll redeem my love.
O *Leontine!* moroſe old *Leontine!* *
Who, for one haſty word, one chol'ric doubt,
Haſt turn'd the ſcale: though in the ſacred balance
My life, my glory, and my empire hung!

Aranth. Moſt ſure, my lord, they are retir'd to *Athens.*
I will ſend poſt to night——

Var. No, no, *Aranthes:*
Prepare my chariots: for I'll go in perſon.
I ſwear, till now, till I began to fear
Some other might enjoy my *Athenais*,
I ſwear I never knew how much I lov'd her.
But let's away; I'll to the emperor,
Then meet thee on the *Hippodrome*——Away †

[*Exeunt at oppoſite doors.*

SCENE

* Thou mere philoſopher! Oh, cruel ſage.

† Thou to the haſty management of my buſineſs:
Prepare; to-day I'll go, to-day I'll find her;
No more; I'll take my leave of *Theodoſius*,
And meet thee on the *Hippodrome*. Away:
Let the wild hurry of thy maſter's love
Make quick thy apprehenſion: haſte, and leave me. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE, Pulcheria, Atticus, Leontine; *votaries leading* Athenais *in proceſſion, after her baptiſm, to be confirmed.*

Atticus *ſings.*

O *Chryſoſtom!* look down and ſee,
An off'ring worthy Heav'n and thee!
So rich the victim, bright and fair,
That ſhe on earth appears a ſtar:

Chor. *Eudoſia* is the virgin's name,
And after-times ſhall ſing her fame.

Atticus. Lead her, votaries, lead in,
Her holy birth does now begin. *

Athen. O princeſs! O moſt worthy of the world. [*Kneels.*
That is ſubmitted by its emperor
To your moſt wiſe and providential ſway!
What *Greek* or *Roman* eloquence can paint
The rapture and devotion of my ſoul!
I'm adopted yours—— †

* 1 *Vot.* In humble weeds, but clean array,
Your hours ſhall ſweetly paſs away;
And when the rites divine are paſt,
To pleaſant gardens you ſhall haſte,
2 *Vot.* Where many a flow'ry bed we have,
That emblem ſtill to each a grave;
And, when within the ſtream we look,
With tears we uſe to ſwell the brook:
But, oh! when in the liquid glaſs
Our Heav'n appears, we ſigh to paſs!
Chor. For Heav'n alone we were deſign'd;
And all things bring our Heav'n to mind.

† —————— you are my goddeſs,
That have new-form'd, new-moulded my conceptions,
And, by the platform of a work divine,
New-fram'd, new-built me to your own deſires:
Thrown all the lumber of my paſſions out,
And made my heart a manſion of perfection;
Clean as an anchorite's grot, or vot'ry's cell,
And ſpotleſs as the glories of his ſteps,
Whom we far off adore!

Pulch. Riſe, *Eudoſia*,
And let me fold my chriſtian in my arms: *
Accept, dear charge, this pledge of my affection:
[*He embraces her.*]
For, by the ſacred friendſhip that I give thee,
I think that Heav'n by miracle did ſend thee †
To be the better part of thy *Pulcheria*,
And ſhare my griefs and joys.

Athen. No, madam, no;
Excuſe the cares that this ſad wretch muſt bring you:
Oh, rather let me leave the world for ever, ‡
That I may fly all human converſation,
That I may never ſee, nor hear, nor name,
Nor think, nor dream, O Heav'n! if poſſible,
Of mankind more.

Pulch. What now! In tears, *Eudoſia*?

Athen. Far from the guilt of palaces, Oh! ſend me!
Drive me, Oh, drive me from the traitor man! ‖

Pulch.

* With this dear pledge of an eternal love,
I ſeal thee, O *Eudoſia*! mine for ever.
Accept, bleſs'd charge, the vows of my affection.

† To eaſe my cares, to help me in my counſels,
To be my ſiſter, partner in my bed;
And equally, thro' my whole courſe of life,

‡ Or if I muſt partake your royal ſecrets,
If you reſolve to load me with ſuch honour,
Let it be far from cities, far from courts.

‖ So I might 'ſcape that monſter, let me dwell
In lions haunts, or in ſome tyger's den;
Place me on ſome ſteep, craggy, ruin'd rock,
That bellies out, juſt dropping in the ocean;
Bury me in the hollow of its womb,
Where, ſtarving on my cold and flinty bed,
I may from far, with giddy apprehenſion,
See infinite fathoms down the rumbling deep.
Yet not ev'n there, in that vaſt whirl of death,
Can there be found ſo terrible a ruin,
As man, falſe man, ſmiling deſtructive man.

It is ſurely unreaſonable to expect that the princeſs ſhould leave the world in order to diſcloſe her ſecrets to this her *new* friend; therefore this part of *Athenais*'s ſpeech has been omitted.

Pulch. Then thou haſt lov'd, *Eudoſia.* O my ſiſter!
Still nearer to my heart, ſo much the dearer,
Becauſe our fates are like, and, hand in hand,
Our fortunes lead us thro' the maze of life:
I'm glad that thou haſt lov'd; nay, lov'd with danger;
Since thou haſt 'ſcap'd the ruin.—Sure, it lightens
The weight of my calamities, that thou
(In all things elſe ſo perfect and divine)
Art yet a-kin to my infirmity,
And bear'ſt thy part in love's melodious ill.
Love, that like bane perfum'd infects the mind,
That ſad delight that charms all woman-kind.
Athen. Yes, madam, I confeſs that love has charm'd me,
But never ſhall again. *
Pulch. The emp'ror——lo——
Beauty like thine may drive that form away,
That has ſo long entranc'd his ſoul——my lord——

Enter Theodoſius *and Attendants.*

Theo. If yet, alas! I might but hope to ſee her;
But, Oh, forgive me, Heav'n, this wilder ſtart,

* But never ſhall again. No, I renounce him;
Inſpire me all the wrongs of abus'd women,
All you that have been cozen'd by falſe men;
See what a ſtrict example I will make:
But for the perjuries of one I will revenge ye
For all that's paſt, tha'ts preſent, and to come.
Pulch. Oh, thou far more than the moſt maſculine virtue!
Where our *Aſtrea!* where, oh, drowning brightneſs,
Where haſt thou been ſo long? Let me again
Proteſt my admiration and my love;
Let me declare aloud, while thou art here,
While ſuch clear virtue ſhines within our circle,
Vice ſhall no more appear within the palace,
But hide her dazzled eyes, and this be call'd
The Holy Court.——But, lo! the Emp'ror comes.

That thus would reach impoſſibility:
No, no, I never muſt behold her more;
As well my *Atticus* might raiſe the dead,
As *Leontine* renew my charming viſion! *

Pulch. My lord, I come to give your grief a cure,
With purer flames to draw that cruel fire
That tortur'd you ſo long——Behold this virgin——
The daughter of your tutor *Leontine*.

Theo. Ah!

Pulch. She is your ſiſter's charge, and made a chriſtian,
And *Athenais* is *Eudoſia* now;
But ſure a fairer never grac'd religion,
And for her virtue ſhe tranſcends example.

Theo. Oh, all you bleſt above, how can this be?
Am I awake? Or is it poſſible? [Athen. *kneels.*

Pulch. She kneels, my lord. Will not you go and raiſe her?

Theo. Nay, do thou raiſe her; for I'm rooted here:
Yet if laborious love and melancholy
Have not o'ercome me, and quite turn'd me mad, †
It muſt be ſhe, that, like *Diana*'s ſelf,
Fled from the river-bank when I approach'd.
Anſwer me, *Leontine*; am I diſtracted?
Or is this true?——By thee in all encounters
I will be rul'd, in temperance and wildneſs,
When reaſon claſhes with extravagance.
But ſpeak——

Leon. 'Tis true, my lord; this is my daughter,
Whom I conceal'd in *Perſia* from all eyes
But yours, when chance directed you that way.

Theo.

* As *Leontine* ſhould charm that form in view.

† It muſt be ſhe, that naked dazzling ſweetneſs!
The very figure of that morning ſtar,
That, dropping pearls, and ſhedding dewy beams,
Fled from the greedy waves when I approach'd.

Theo. He ſays 'tis true: why then this heartleſs carriage?
Oh! were I proof againſt the darts of love,
And cold to beauty as the marble lover
That lies, without a thought, upon his tomb;
Would not this glorious dawn of life run through me,
And waken death itſelf? Why am I ſlow then?
What hinders now, but that, in ſpite of rules,
I burſt through all the bands of death that hold me,
[*He kneels.*
And fly with ſuch a haſte to that appearance,
As bury'd ſaints ſhall make at the laſt ſummons?

Athen. The emp'ror at my feet! O ſir! forgive me;
Mock not your hand-maid thus——*

Leon. She is unworthy——— †

Theo. Ha! what ſay'ſt thou, *Leontine?*
Unworthy, ſay'ſt thou! Wert thou not her father,
I ſwear I would revenge—But haſte, and tell me;
(For love like mine will bear no ſecond thought)
Can all the honours of the Orient,
Thus ſacrific'd with the moſt pure affection,
With ſpotleſs thoughts, and languiſhing deſires,
Obtain, O *Leontine!* (the crown at laſt)
To thee I ſpeak, thy daughter for my bride?

Leon. My lord, the honour bears ſuch eſtimation,
It calls the blood into my aged cheeks,
And quite o'erwhelms my daughter with confuſion;
Who, with her body proſtrate on the earth,
Ought to adore you for the proffer'd glory.

Theo.

* Drown me not thus with everlaſting ſhame.
Both heaven and earth muſt bluſh at ſuch a view;
Nor can I bear it longer———

† Unworthy! O thou atheiſt to perfection!
All that the blooming earth could ſend forth fair!
All that the gaudy heavens could drop down glorious!

Theo. Let me embrace and thank thee, O kind Heav'n!
O *Atticus! Pulcheria!* O my friends!
Was ever joy like mine? your *Theodosius*, *
By a miracle, is brought from death to life;
His melancholy's gone, and now once more
He shall appear at the state's helm again;
Nor fear a wreck while this bright star directs us. †

Athen. Alas, my lord, consider my extraction,
With all my other wants——

Theo. Peace, empress, peace!
No more the daughter of old *Leontine*;
A christian now, and partner of the east.

Athen. My father has dispos'd me, you command me;
What can I answer then, but my obedience?

Theo. Attend her, dear *Pulcheria*; and, Oh, tell her,

To-

* O *Atticus! Pulcheria!* O my father!
Was ever change like mine? Run through the streets;
Who waits there? Run, and, loud as Fame can speak,
With trumpet-sounds proclaim the Emp'ror's joy;
And, as of old, on the great festival
Of her they call *the mother of the gods*,
Let all work cease; at least, an oaken garland
Crown each plebeian head: Let sprightly bowls
Be dol'd about, and the toss'd cymbals sound;
Tell 'em, their much-lamented *Theodosius*,

† For while she shines, no sands, no couring rocks
Shall lie unseen, but I will cut my way,
Secure as *Neptune*, through the highest stream,
And to the port in safety steer the world.

To-morrow, if she please, I will be hers——*
Oh, why so long should I my joys delay?†

[*Exeunt* Pulch. *and* Athen.

Enter Varanes *and* Aranthes.

Var. O *Theodosius!*

Theo. Ha! my brother here!
Why dost thou come to make my bliss run o'er?
What is there more to wish?‡
O my *Varanes!*
Thou that of late didst seem to walk on clouds,
Now give a loose, let go the slacken'd reins,
Let us drive down the precipice of joy,
As if that all the winds of Heav'n were for us.

Var. My lord, I'm glad to find the gale is turn'd;
Plough on your way, with all your streamers out, §
And leave me to the waves,——
The sure destruction,
And ready gulphs that gape to swallow me.

Theo. It was thy hand that drew me from the grave,
Who had been dead by this time to ambition,

To

* "I will be happy" is too profaick, and being a phrase so common, It is exchanged for "I will be here."

† Time imp thy wings, let not thy minutes stay,
But to a moment change the tedious day,
The day! 'twill be an age before to-morrow:
An age, a death, a vast eternity,
Where we shall cold, and dull enjoyment, lie.

‡ What is there more to wish? Fortune can find
No flaw in such a glut of happiness,
To let one mis'ry in——O my *Varanes!*

§ With all your glorious flags and streamers ride
Triumphant on——and leave to the waves,
The sands, the winds, the rocks, the sure destruction,

To crowns, to titles, and my ſlighted greatneſs.
But ſtill, as if each work of thine deſerv'd
The ſmile of Heav'n——at length thy friend has met *
With ſomething dearer than his diadem,
With all that is worth wiſhing for, or living †
I've met with that which made me leave the world.

Var. And I, Oh turn of chance! Oh curſed fortune!
Have loſt at once all that could make me happy. ‡
The gods, my dear, my moſt-lov'd *Theodoſius*,
Double upon thee all the joys thou'ſt found! ‖
For ſure thou art moſt worthy, worthy more
Than *Jove* in all his prodigality
Can e'er beſtow in bleſſings on mankind.
And, Oh, methinks my ſoul is ſtrangely mov'd,
Takes it the more unkindly of her ſtars,
That thou and I cannot be bleſt together:
For I muſt leave thee, friend! this night muſt leave thee,
To go in doubtful ſearch of what, perhaps,
I ne'er ſhall find; if ſo my cruel fate
Has order'd it; why then farewel for ever. **

Theo. How ſenſible my tender ſoul is grown
Of what you utter! O my gallant friend!
My brother, my *Varanes*, do not judge
By what I ſpeak, for ſighs will interrupt me:
Judge by my tears, judge by theſe ſtrict embraces,
And by my laſt reſolve: though I have met
With what in ſilence I ſo long ador'd;

Though

* The ſmile of heav'n——thy *Theodoſius* met

† With all that's worth a wiſh, that's worth a life;

‡ O ye too partial pow'rs!——But now no more:

‖ Double all thoſe joys that thou haſt met upon thee!

** For I ſhall never, never ſee thee more.

Though in the rapture of proteſting joys,
I had ſet down to-morrow for my nuptials; †
Yet, my *Varanes*, I will rob my ſoul
Of all her health, of my imperial bride,
And wander with thee in the ſearch of that
On which thy life depends——

Var. If this I ſuffer,
Conclude me then begotten of a hind,
And bred in wilds: No, *Theodoſius*, no;
I charge thee by our friendſhip, and conjure thee,
By all the gods, to mention this no more.
Perhaps, dear friend, I ſhall be ſooner here
Than you expect, or I myſelf imagine;
What moſt I grieve is, that I cannot wait
To ſee your nuptials: yet my ſoul is with you,
And all my adorations to your bride.

Theo. What, my *Varanes!* will you be ſo cruel
As not to ſee my bride before you go?
Or are you angry at your rival's charms,
Who has already raviſh'd half my heart,
That once was all your own?

Var. I am diſorder'd, ‡
My melancholy ſuits not her condition.

[*Exit* Theod.

And the gods know; ſince thou, my *Athenais*,
Art fled from theſe ſick eyes, all other women
To my pall'd ſoul ſeem like the ghoſt of beauty,
And haunt my mem'ry with the loſs of thee.

[*Enter* Athenais, Theodoſius *leading her.*

Theo. Behold, my lord, th' occaſion of my joy.

† And *Atticus* to-night prepares the temple.

‡ *Var.* You know I am diſorder'd!

Var. O ye immortal gods! *Aranthes!* Oh!
Look there, and wonder: Ha! is't poſſible?

Athen. My lord, the emp'ror ſays you are his friend,
He charges me to uſe my intereſt,
And beg of you to ſtay at leaſt ſo long
As our eſpouſals will be ſolemnizing;
I told him I was honour'd once to know you;
But that ſo ſlightly as I could not warrant
The grant of any thing that I ſhould aſk.

Var. O heaven and earth! O *Athenais!* why,
Why doſt thou uſe me thus? Had I the world,
Thou know'ſt it ſhould be thine——

Athen. I know not that——‖
My lord, the prince is obſtinate, his glory
Scorns to be mov'd by the weak breath of woman:
He is all hero, bent for higher views,
Therefore 'tis nobler, ſir, to let him go:
If not for him, my lord, yet for myſelf,
I muſt intreat permiſſion to retire. [*Exit* Athen. *&c.*

Var. Death and deſpair! Confuſion! Hell and furies!

Thes. Heaven guard thy health, and ſtill preſerve thy virtue!
What ſhould this mean? I fear the conſequence,
For 'tis too plain they know each other well.

Var. Undone, *Aranthes!* loſt, undone for ever!
I ſee my doom, I read it with broad eyes,
As plain as if I ſaw the book of fate:
Yet will I muſter all my ſpirits up,
Digeſt my griefs, ſwallow the riſing paſſions;
Yes, I will ſtand the ſhock of all the gods
Well as I can, and ſtruggle for my life.

Thes.

‖ But yet, to make ſure work, one half of it
Is mine already, ſir, without your giving.

This taunt is rather inſulting him too early, as ſhe is not yet married, therefore theſe two lines have been omitted.

Theo. You muſe, my lord; and if you'll give me leave
To judge your thoughts, they ſeem employ'd at preſent
About my bride——I gueſs you know her too.

Var. His bride! O gods, give me a moment's patience,
I muſt confeſs, the ſight of *Athenais*,
Where I ſo little did expect to find her,
So grac'd, and ſo adorn'd, did raiſe my wonder:
But what exceeds all admiration, is,
That you ſhould talk of making her your bride;
'Tis ſuch a blind effect of monſtrous chance,
That though I well remember you affirm'd it,
I cannot yet believe——

Theo. Then now believe me:
By all the pow'rs divine I will eſpouſe her.

Var. Ha! I ſhall leap the bounds. Come, come, my lord,
By all thoſe powers you nam'd, I ſay you muſt not.

Theo. I ſay, I will; and who ſhall bar my pleaſure?
Yet more, I ſpeak the judgment of my ſoul.
Weigh but with fortune merit in the balance,
And *Athenais* loſes by the marriage.

Var. Relentleſs fates! malicious cruel pow'rs!
Oh, for what crime do you thus rack your creature?
Sir, I muſt tell you, this unkingly meanneſs
Suits the profeſſion of an anchorite well;
But in an Oriental emperor
It gives offence; nor can you, without ſcandal,
Without the notion of a grov'ling ſpirit,
Eſpouſe the daughter of old *Leontine*,
Whoſe utmoſt glory is to have been my tutor.

Theo. He has ſo well acquitted that employment,
Breeding you up to ſuch a gallant height
Of full perfection, and imperial greatneſs,

That ev'n for this reſpect, if for no other,
I will eſteem him worthy while I live.

Var. My lord, you'll pardon me a little freedom;
For I muſt boldly urge in ſuch a cauſe,
Whoever flatters you, though ne'er ſo much
Related to your blood, ſhould be ſuſpected.

Theo. If friendſhip would admit a cold ſuſpicion,
After what I have heard and ſeen to-day,
Of all mankind I ſhould ſuſpect *Varanes*.

Var. He has ſtung me to the heart; my groans will choak me,
Unleſs my ſtruggling paſſion gets a vent.
Out with it then——I can no more diſſemble——
Yes, yes, my lord: ſince you reduce me to
The laſt neceſſity, I will confeſs it;
I muſt avow my flame for *Athenais*;
I am all love——my paſſion fires my brain, *
Boils in my blood——and rages in my heart.
My pangs redouble——now, Oh! madneſs help me!

Theo. Alas, *Varanes!* which of us the Gods
Have mark'd for death, is yet above the ſtars;
But, while we live, let us preſerve our friendſhip
Sacred and juſt, as we have ever done.
This only mean in two ſuch hard extremes
Remains for both: to-morrow you ſhall ſee her,
With all advantage in her own apartment;
Take your own time, ſay all you can to gain her;

If

* I muſt avow my flame for *Athenais*.
I am all on fire, my paſſion eats me up,
It grows incorp'rate with my fleſh and blood;
My pangs redouble; now they cleave my heart!
O *Athenais!* O *Eudoſia!*——Oh——
Tho' plain as day I ſee my own deſtruction,
Yet to my death, and oh, let all the gods
Bear witneſs! ſtill I ſwear I will adore thee.

If you can win her, lead her into *Perſia*;
If not, conſent that I eſpouſe her here.
Var. Still worſe and worſe! O *Theodoſius!* Oh,
I cannot ſpeak for ſighs: my death is ſeal'd
By this laſt ſweetneſs: had you been leſs good,
I might have hop'd: But now my doom's at hand.
Go then and take her, take her to the temple;
The gods too give you joy! O, *Athenais!*
Why does thy image mock my fooliſh ſorrow?
O, *Theodoſius*, do not ſee my tears:
Away, and leave me; leave me to the grave.
Theo. Farewell! let's leave the iſſue to the Heav'ns;
I will prepare your way with all that honour
Can urge in your behalf, tho' to my ruin. [*Ex.* Theo.
Var. Oh, I could tear my limbs, and eat my fleſh!
Fool that I was, fond, proud, vain-glorious fool!
Damn'd be all courts, and trebly damn'd ambition!
Blaſted be thy remembrance! Curſes on thee!
And plagues on plagues fall on thoſe fools that ſeek thee!
Aran. Have comfort, ſir——
Var. Away, and leave me, villain!
Traitor, who wrought me firſt to my deſtruction!——
Yet ſtay, and help, help me to curſe my pride——
Help me to wiſh that I had ne'er been royal.
Why was I born, ye Gods, a monarch's heir, †
With pomp encumber'd, and immers'd in care?
Oh! had my kinder deſtiny decreed
A humbler ſtate, from conſcious grandeur freed!

[In

† That I had never heard the name of *Cyrus*;
That my firſt brawl in court had been my laſt!
O, that I had been born ſome happy ſwain,
And never known a life ſo great, ſo vain!
Where I extremes might not be forc'd to chooſe,
And, bleſs'd with ſome mean wife, no crown could loſe:

Where

In peaceful poverty my life had shar'd
A lot obscure, that with the many far'd,
Content with freedom and my little store;
And love, perhaps, had made the blessings more.

ACT

Where the dear partner of my little state,
With all her smiling offspring, at the gate,
Blessing my labours, might my coming wait:
Where in our humble beds all safe might lie,
And not in cursed courts for glory die.——[*Exeunt.*

SONG.

I.

Hail to the myrtle shade,
All hail to the nymphs of the fields!
Kings would not here invade
Those pleasures that Virtue yields.
Chor. Beauty here opens her arms,
To soften the languishing mind;
And *Phyllis* unlocks her charms,
Ah *Phyllis!* ah why so kind?

II.

Phyllis, thou soul of love,
Thou joy of the neighbouring swains;
Phyllis that crowns the grove,
And *Phyllis* that gilds the plains;
Chor. *Phyllis* that ne'er had the skill
To paint, and to patch, and be fine;
Yet *Phyllis* whose eyes can kill,
Whom Nature had made divine.

III.

Phyllis, whose charming song
Makes labour and pains a delight;
Phyllis, that makes the day young,
And shortens the live-long night;
Chor. *Phyllis*, whose lips like May,
Still laughs at the sweets that they bring;
Where Love ne'er knows decay,
But sees with eternal spring.

ACT IV.

Enter Marcian *and* Lucius *at a diſtance.*

Marc. THE gen'ral of the Oriental armies,
Was a commiſſion large as fate could give.
'Tis gone——and, Fortune, I defy thee now. *
When once the favour of his prince is turn'd,
Shunn'd as a ghoſt the clouded man appears,
And all the gaudy worſhippers forſake him. †
O *Lucius! Lucius!* if thou leav'ſt me too,
I think I could not bear it—— ‡

Gods!

* 'Tis gone. Why, what care I? O Fortune, Fortune!
Thou languiſhing empreſs of the buſy world,
Marcian defies thee now ——
Why, what a thing is a diſcarded favourite?
He who but now, tho' longing to retire,
Cou'd not for buſy waiters be alone.
Throng'd in his chamber, haunted to his cloſet,
With a full croud, and an eternal court;

† So fares it now with me where-e'er I come,
As if I were another *Cataline*.
The courtiers riſe, and no man will ſit near me!
As if the plague were on me, all men fly me.

‡ But like a ſlave, my ſpirit, broke with ſuff'ring,
Should on theſe coward knees fall down, and beg
Once to be great again.——
Luc. Forbid it, Heaven!
That e'er the noble *Marcian* condeſcend
To aſk of any but th' immortal gods!
Nay, I avow, if yet your ſpirit dare,
Spite of the Court, you ſhall be great as *Cæſar*.
Mar. No, *Lucius*, no; the gods repel that humour:
Yet ſince we are alone, and muſt ere long
Leave this bad court, let us, like veterans,

Speak

Gods! gods! is this the image of our *Cæsars*? ‖
Oh, why so poorly have you stamp'd *Rome*'s glory! *
This waxen portraiture of majesty,
Which every warmer passion does melt down,
And makes him fonder than a woman's longing.

Luc. Thus much I know, to the eternal shame
Of the imperial blood; this upstart empress,
This fine new queen, is sprung from abject parents;
Nay, basely born! But that's all one to him:
He likes, and loves, and therefore marries her.

Marc. Shall I not speak? Shall I not tell him of it? †

Enter

Speak out—Thou sayst, alas, as great as *Cæsar*!
But where's his greatness? where is his ambition?
If any sparks of virtue yet remain
In this poor figure of the Roman glory;
I say, if any be, how dim they shine,
Compar'd with what his great forefathers were!
How should he lighten then, or awe the world,
Whose soul in courts is but a lambent fire;
And scarce, O Rome, a glow-worm in the field!
Soft, young, religious! godlike qualities
For one that should recover the lost empire,
And wade through seas of blood, and walk o'er mountains
Of slaughter'd bodies, to immortal honour!

Luc. Poor heart! he pin'd a while ago for love.

Marc. And for his mistress vow'd to leave the world;
But some new chance, it seems, has chang'd his mind.
A marriage! but to whom, or whence she came,
None knows; but yet a marriage is proclaim'd;
Pageants prepar'd; the arches are adorn'd;
The statutes crown'd; the Hippodrome does groan
Beneath the burden of the mounted warriors;
The theatre is open'd too, where he
And the hot *Persian* mean to act their follies.

‖ Is this the model of our *Romulus*?

* Not Rome's but yours! Is this man fit to bear it?

† I feel this big-swoln throbbing *Roman* spirit
Will burst unless I utter what I ought.

Enter Pulcheria *with a Paper in her hand, and* Julia.

Pulcheria, here! why ſhe's the ſcourge of *Marcian*;
I tremble, too, whenever ſhe approaches: *
Spite of myſelf I bluſh, and cannot ſtir,
While ſhe is here——What, *Lucius*, can this mean?
'Tis ſaid, *Calphurnia* had the heart of *Cæſar*.
Auguſtus doated on the ſubtle *Livia*. †

Pulch. Come hither, *Marcian*, read this paper o'er,
And mark the ſtrange neglect of *Theodoſius*.
He ſigns whate'er I bring; perhaps you've heard
That he'll to-morrow wed a maid of *Athens*, ‡
Now made a chriſtian, and new-nam'd *Eudoſia*,
Whom he more dearly prizes than his empire;
Yet in this paper he hath ſet his hand,
And ſeal'd it too with the imperial ſignet,
That ſhe ſhall loſe her head to-morrow morning.

Marc. 'Tis not for me to judge; yet this ſeems ſtrange.

Pulch. I know he rather would commit a murder
On his own perſon, than permit a vein
Of her to bleed; yet, *Marcian*, what might follow,
If I were envious of this virgin's honour? §
Ha! but I had forgot——haſte——let's away,

* And my heart dances an unuſual meaſure:

† Why ſhould I not worſhip that fair angel?
Oh, didſt thou mark her, when her fury lighten'd?
She ſeem'd all goodneſs; nay, her frowns became her:
There was a beauty in her very wildneſs.
Were I a man born great as our firſt founder,
Sprung from the Blood Divine——but I am caſt
Beyond all poſſibility of hope——

‡ To-morrow he intends to wed a maid of *Athens*,

§ By his raſh paſſing whatſoe'er I offer——
Without a view. Ha! but I had forgot:
Julia, let's haſte from this infectious perſon——

I had forgot that *Marcian* was a traitor:
Yet, by the pow'rs divine, I ſwear 'tis pity. *
O *Marcian*, *Marcian!* I could weep to think
Virtue ſhould loſe itſelf as thine has done.
Repent, raſh man, if yet 'tis not too late—— †

[*Exeunt* Pulch. *and* Jul.

Marc. Nay go not, madam, I'm reſolv'd to ſpeak;
Then, if you pleaſe, take off this traitor's head;
End my commiſſion and my life together. ‡

Luc. Now by my life, my lord, I think ſhe loves you: ‖
Pulcheria loves this traitor. Did you mark her?
At firſt ſhe had forgot your baniſhment;
Makes you her counſellor, and tells her ſecrets. §
With ſuch deſcription of your gallantry
As none but love could make; then taking leave,
Through the dark laſhes of her darting eyes,
Methought ſhe ſhot her ſoul at every glance. **

Marc. Alas; thou doſt not know her, nor do I:
Nor can the wit of all mankind conceive her.
But let's away. This paper is of uſe.

Luc.

* That one ſo form'd by nature for all honour,
All titles, greatneſs, dignities imperial,
The nobleſt perſon, and the braveſt courage,
Should not be honeſt: *Julia*, is't not pity?

† And mend thy errors; ſo farewell for ever.

[*Exeunt* Pulch. *and* Jul.

‡ *Mar.* Farewell for ever! No, Madam, ere I go,
I am reſolv'd to ſpeak, and you ſhall hear me;

‖ *Luc.* Perhaps you'll laugh at what I'm going to ſay;

§ As to a friend; nay, leaves them in your hand,
And ſays, 'tis pity that you are not honeſt!

** Still looking back, as if ſhe had a mind
That you ſhould know ſhe left her heart behind her.

Luc. I gueſs your purpoſe:
He is a boy, and as a boy you'll uſe him:
There is no other way.

Marc. Yes, if he be not
Quite dead with ſleep, for ever loſt to honour,
Marcian with this ſhall rouſe him. O my *Lucius!*
Methinks the ghoſts of the great *Theodoſius*
And thund'ring *Conſtantine* appear before me:
They charge me as a ſoldier to chaſtiſe him,
To laſh him with keen words from lazy love,
And ſhew him how they trod the paths of honour.
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.*

Theodoſius *alone, and reclining on a couch.*

Enter Marcian *with a paper.*

Theo. Ha! what raſh thing art thou,
Thus to intrude on *Cæſar*'s ſolitude,
And urge me to thy ruin?

*SCENE II.

THEODOSIUS *lying on a couch, with two boys dreſs'd like* Cupids, *ſinging to him as he ſleeps.*

SONG.

Happy day, ah happy day,
That *Cæſar*'s beams did firſt diſplay!
So peaceful was the happy day,
The gods themſelves did all look down,
The royal infant's birth to crown,
So pleas'd they ſcarce did on the guilty frown.

Happy day, ah happy day!
And, oh, thrice happy hour,
That made ſuch goodneſs maſter of ſuch pow'r.
For thus the gods declare to men,
No day like this ſhall ever come again.

Enter Marcian *with an order.*

Theo. Ha! what raſh thing art thou, who ſett'ſt ſo ſmall
A value on thy life, thus to preſume
Againſt the fatal orders I have giv'n,
Thus to entrench on *Cæſar's* ſolitude,

Marc. Mighty ſir,
I have tranſgreſs'd, and for my pardon bow
To thee, as to the gods when I offend:
Nor can I doubt your mercy, when you know
The nature of my crime. I am commiſſion'd
From all the earth to give thee thanks and praiſes,
Thou darling of mankind! whoſe conqu'ring arms
Already drown the glory of great *Julius*, *
And make barbarians tremble. O ye gods!
Should deſtiny now end thee in thy bloom,
Methinks I ſee thee mourn'd above the loſs
Of lov'd *Germanicus*, thy funerals,
Like his, are ſolemniz'd with tears and blood.

Theo. How, *Marcian!*

Marc. Yes, the raging multitude,
Like torrents, ſet no bound to their mad grief, †
Since he is gone the father of his country.

Theo. I know thee well, thy cuſtom and thy manners;
Thou doſt upbraid me; but no more of this,
Not for thy life——— *Marc.*

* Whoſe deeper reach in laws and policy
Makes wiſe *Auguſtus* envy thee in heav'n!
What mean the Fates by ſuch prodigious virtue?
When ſcarce the manly down yet ſhades thy face,
With conqueſts thus to over-run the world,

† Shave their wives' heads, and tear off their own hair;
With wild deſpair they bring their infants out,
To brawl their parents' ſorrow in the ſtreets.
Trade is no more, all courts of juſtice ſtopt;
With ſtones they daſh the windows of their temples,
Pull down their altar; break their houſehold gods;
And ſtill the univerſal groan is this,
"Conſtantinople's loſt, our empire's ruin'd;
Since he is gone, that father of his country,
Since he is dead, O life, where is thy pleaſure?
O Rome, O conquer'd world, where is thy glory?"

Marc. What's life without my honour?
Could you transform yourſelf into a Gorgon,
Or make that beardleſs face like *Jupiter's*,
I would be heard in ſpite of all your thunder, *
And then farewel for ever.

Theo. Preſuming *Marcian!*
What canſt thou urge againſt my innocence?
Through the whole courſe of all my harmleſs youth,
Ev'n to this hour, I cannot call to mind
One wicked act which I have done to ſhame me.

Marc. This may be true; yet if you give the ſway
To other hands, and your poor ſubjects ſuffer,
Your negligence to them is as the cauſe.
O *Theodoſius!* credit him, who knows
The world, and hears how ſoldiers cenſure kings;
In after-times, if thus you ſhould go on,
Your memory by warriors will be ſcorn'd, †
And what a thing, ye gods, is ſcorn or pity?
Heap on me, Heav'n, the hate of all mankind,
Load me with malice, envy, deteſtation;
Let me be horrid to all apprehenſion,
And the world hate me——ſo I 'ſcape but ſcorn.

Theo.

* O pow'r of guilt! you fear to ſtand the teſt
Which Virtue brings; like ſores, your vices ſhake
Before this *Roman* healer. But, by the gods,
Before I go I'll rip the malady,
And let the venom flow before your eyes.
This is a debt to the great *Theodoſius*,
The grandfather of your illuſtrious blood:

† As much as *Nero* or *Caligula* loath'd;
They will deſpiſe your ſloth, and backward eaſe,
More than they hate the other's cruelty.

Theo. Pr'ythee—no more—begone—I ſay—begone. ‡
Marc. Not till you've heard me out.

Theo.

‡ *Theo.* Pr'ythee, no more.

Marc. Nay, when the legions make compariſons;
And ſay, Thus cruel *Nero* once reſolv'd,
On *Galba*'s inſurrection, for revenge,
To give all *France* as plunder to the army;
To poiſon the whole ſenate at a feaſt;
To burn the city, turn the wild beaſts out,
Bears, lions, tigers, on the multitude;
That ſo obſtructing thoſe that quench'd the fire,
He might at once deſtroy rebellious *Rome*———

Theo. O cruelty! why tell'ſt thou me of this?
Am I of ſuch a barb'rous bloody temper?

Marc. Yet ſome will ſay, This ſhew'd he had a ſpirit,
However fierce, avenging, and pernicious,
That ſavour'd of a *Roman:* but for you,
What can your partial ſycophants invent,
To make you room among the emperors?
Whoſe utmoſt is the ſmalleſt part of *Nero*;
A pretty player, one that can act a hero,
And never be one. O y' immortal gods,
Is this the old *Cæſarian* Majeſty?
Now, in the name of our great *Romulus*,
Why ſing you not, and fiddle too, as he did?
Why have you not, like *Nero*, a *Phonaſcus*?
One to take care of your celeſtial voice?
Lie on your back, my Lord; and on your ſtomach
Lay a thin plate of lead; abſtain from fruits;
And when the buſineſs of the ſtage is done,
Retire with your looſe friends to coſtly banquets,
While the lean army groans upon the ground.

Theo. Leave me, I ſay, leſt I chaſtiſe thee: hence!
Be gone, I ſay———

Marc. Not till youv'e heard me out.——
Build too, like him, a palace lin'd with gold,
As long and large as that of th' *Eſquiline*:
Encloſe a pool too in it, like the ſea;
And at the emperor's coſt let natives meet:

Adorn

Theo. Come——you're a traitor.

Marc. Oh, temper, temper me, ye gracious gods!

Give

Adorn your ſtarry chambers too with gems;
Contrive the platted ceilings to turn round,
With pipes to caſt ambroſian oils upon you:
Conſume, with this prodigious vanity,
In mere perfumes, and od'rous diſtillations,
Of ſeſterces at once four hundred millions:
Let naked virgins wait you at your table,
And wanton Cupids dance, and clap their wings.
No matter what becomes of the poor ſoldiers,
So they perform the drudg'ry they are fit for!
Why, let them ſtarve for want of their arrears,
Drop as they go, and lie like dogs in ditches.

Theo. Come, you're a traitor!

Marc. Go to, you're a boy!
Or by the gods——

Theo. If arrogance like this,
And to the emperor's face, ſhould 'ſcape unpuniſh'd,
I'll write myſelf a coward. Die then, villain,
A death too glorious for ſo bad a man,
By *Theodoſius*' hand.

[Marcian *diſarms him, but is wounded.*

Mar. Now, Sir, where are you?
What, in the name of all our *Roman* ſpirits,
Now charms my hand from giving thee thy fate?
Has he not cut me off from all my honours,
Torn my commiſſions, ſham'd me to the earth,
Baniſh'd the court, a vagabond for ever?
Does not the ſoldiers hourly aſk it from me?
Sigh their own wrongs, and beg me to revenge 'em?
What hinders now, but that I mount the throne,
And make, beſides, this purple youth my footſtool?
The armies court me: and my country's cauſe,
The injuries of *Rome* and *Greece* perſuade me.
Shew but this *Roman* blood which he has drawn,
They'll make me emp'ror whether I will or no:

Did

Give to my hand forbearance, to my heart
Its conſtant loyalty—I would but ſhake him,
Rouſe him a little from this death of honour,
And ſhew him what he ſhould be—O my lord,
Think of my wrongs———
Haſt thou not cut me off from all my honours?
Torn my commiſſion, baniſh'd me the court,
Sham'd me abroad?——What hinders my revenge?
Does not the ſoldier hourly aſk it from me?
Your life is in my power———
Are we not here alone?——But hold my hand!
I know my duty——and thus at your feet
I caſt me, with this weapon of offence.

[*He throws away his ſword.*

Theo. Riſe, *Marcian*, I forgive thee——in my turn
Let me be heard.

Marc.

Did not, for leſs than this, the latter *Brutus*,
Becauſe he thought *Rome* wrong'd, in perſon head
Againſt his friend a black conſpiracy,
And ſtab the majeſty of all the world?

Theo. Act as you pleaſe: I am within your pow'r.

Marc. Did not the former *Brutus* for the crime
Of *Sextus* drive old *Tarquin* from his kingdom?
And ſhall this prince too, by permitting others
To act their wicked wills and lawleſs pleaſures,
Raviſh from the empire its dear health,
Well-being, happineſs, and ancient glory,
Go on in this diſhonourable reſt?
Shall he, I ſay, dream on, while the ſtarv'd troops
Lie cold and waking in the winter camp,
And, like pin'd birds, for want of ſuſtenance,
Feed on the haws and berries of the fields?
O temper, temper me, ye gracious gods;
Give to my hand forbearance, to my heart
Its conſtant loyalty! I would but ſhake him,
Rouſe him a little from this death of honour,
And ſhew him what he ſhould be.

Marc. My lord, I'm all attention.

Theo. You accuſe me,
As if I were ſome monſter moſt unheard of;
Firſt, as the ruin of the army; then
Of taking your commiſſion; but, by Heav'n,
I ſwear, O *Marcian!* this I never did,
Nor e'er intended it: nor ſay I this
To alter thy ſtern uſage; for with what
Thou'ſt ſaid, and done, and brought to my remembrance,
I grow already weary of my life.

Marc. My lord, I take your word—you do not know
The wounds which rage within your country's bowels;
The horrid uſage of the ſuff'ring ſoldier:
But why will not our *Theodoſius* know?
If you intruſt the government to others
That act theſe crimes, who but yourſelf's to blame? *
Let not this lethargy for ever hold you.
'Twas rumour'd through the city that you lov'd,
That your eſpouſals ſhould be ſolemniz'd;
When, on a ſudden, here, you ſend your orders
That this bright favourite, the lov'd *Eudoſia*,
Should loſe her head.

Theo. O Heav'n and earth! What ſay'ſt thou,
That I have ſeal'd the death of my *Eudoſia!*

Marc. 'Tis your own hand and ſignet: yet I ſwear,
Tho' you have giv'n to female hands your ſway,
And therefore I, as well as the whole army,
For ever ought to curſe all womankind,

* Be witneſs, O ye gods! of my plain dealing,
Of *Marcian*'s honeſty, howe'er degraded.
I thank you for my baniſhment: but, alas!
My loſs is little to what ſoon will follow:
Reflect but on yourſelf, and your own joys;

Yet when the virgin came, as ſhe was doom'd,
And on the ſcaffold, for that purpoſe rais'd
Without the walls, appear'd before the army——

Theo. What, on a ſcaffold? Ha! before the army?

Marc. How quickly was the tide of fury turn'd
To ſoft compaſſion and relenting tears:
But when the ax
Sever'd the brighteſt maſter-work of nature *
From that fair body, had you heard the groan,
Which, like a peal of diſtant thunder, ran
Through all the armed hoſt! †

Theo. —— *Pulcheria!*
Cruel, ambitious ſiſter, this muſt be
Thy doing! O ſupport me, noble *Martian!*
Now, now's the time, if thou dar'ſt ſtrike; behold,
I offer thee my breaſt; with my laſt breath
I'll thank thee too, if now thou draw'ſt my blood.
Were I to live, thy counſel ſhould direct me;
But 'tis too late—— [*He ſwoons.*

Marc. He faints! What, hoa, there, *Lucius!*

Enter Lucius.

My lord, *Eudoſia* lives! revive——look up ‡
Think of your bride——She calls you to the temple.
O *Lucius*, help!——I've gone too far—but ſee,
He breathes again—*Eudoſia* has awak'd him.

Theo. Did you not name *Eudoſia?*

Marc.

* Sever'd the brighteſt beauty of the earth.

† Through all the arm'd hoſt, you would have thought,
By the immediate darkneſs that fell round us,
Whole Nature was concern'd at ſuch a ſuff'ring,
And all the gods were angry.

‡ My lord the emp'ror! *Eudoſia* lives;
She's here, or will be in a minute, moment!
Quick as the thought, ſhe calls you to the temple.

Marc. Yes, ſhe lives;
I did but feign the ſtory of her death,
To find how near you plac'd her to your heart:
And may the gods rain all their plagues upon me,
If ever I rebuke you thus again:
Yet 'tis moſt certain that you ſign'd her death,
Not knowing what the wiſe *Pulcheria* offer'd,
Who left it in my hand to ſtartle you: ‡
Behold your order—ſee the royal ſignet
Which thus I tear—and ſcatter to the winds.
O pardon me, my emperor—dear prince!
Droop not becauſe I utter'd ſome raſh words,
And was a madman——by th' immortal gods,
I love you as my ſoul: whate'er I ſaid,
My thoughts were otherwiſe; believe theſe tears,
Which do not uſe to flow; all ſhall be well:
I ſwear that there are ſeeds in that ſweet temper,
T'atone for all the crimes in this bad age.

Theo. I thank thee—firſt, for my *Eudoſia*'s life.
What, but my love, could have call'd back that life,
Which thou haſt made me hate? And, Oh! methought
'Twas hard, dear *Marcian*, very hard from thee,
From him I ever honour'd as a father,
To hear ſo harſh a meſſage——But no more;
We're friends—thy hand—Nay, if thou wilt not riſe,
And let me fold my arms about thy neck,
I'll not believe thy love—In this forgive me:
Firſt let me wed *Eudoſia*, and we'll out;
We will, my general, and make amends

‡ But by my life and fame, I did not think
It would have touch'd your life. O pardon me,
Dear prince, my lord, my emp'ror, royal maſter!

For all that's paſt——Glory and arms, ye call,
And *Marcian* leads me on—— *

Mar. My Emperor,
May this great ſpirit gain large ſtrength within you,
And be embolden'd by th'inſpiring gods!
" My gallant prince, at ev'ry word you ſpeak
" My heart takes fire, and I foreſee your greatneſs.
" From the ſeven hills, where Empire ſate enthron'd,
" The baniſh'd genius ſeeks our eaſt onee more:
" Since *Goths*, barbarians, bigots, prieſtly ſway
" Now triumph o'er the queen of nations fall'n;
" Let us on *Rome*'s example fix our eye,
" And baniſh ſloth and fatal luxury. [*Exit* Marcian.

Theo. O *Marcian!* O my brother, father, all!
Thou

* *Mar.* Let her not reſt then;
Eſpouſe her ſtraight: I'll ſtrike you at a heat.
May this great humour get large growth within you,
And be encourag'd by the embold'ning gods!
O what a ſight will this be to the ſoldier,
To ſee me bring you dreſs'd in ſhining armour,
To head the ſhouting ſquadrons!——O ye gods!
Methinks I hear the echoing cries of joy,
The ſounds of trumpets, and the beat of drums.
I ſee each ſtarving ſoldier bound from earth,
As if a god by miracle had rais'd him;
And, with beholding you, grow fat again!
Nothing but gazing eyes, and op'ning mouths,
Cheeks red with joy, and lifted hands about you;
Some wiping the glad tears that trickle down
With broken Io's, and with ſobbing raptures,
Crying, To arms; he's come; our emp'ror's come
To win the world! Why, is not this far better
Than lolling in a lady's lap, and ſleeping,
Faſting, or praying? Come, come, you ſhall be merry,
And for *Eudoſia*, ſhe is yours already:
Marcian has ſaid it, ſir; ſhe ſhall be yours.

Thou beſt of friends, moſt faithful counſellor,
I'll find a match for thee too, ere I reſt,
To make thee love me; for when thou art with me, †
I'm ſtrong and well——without thee——I am nothing.

Enter Athenais, *meeting* Theodoſius.

Alas, *Eudoſia!* tell me what to ſay;
For my full heart can ſcarce bring forth a word
Of that which I have ſworn to ſee perform'd.

Athen. I'm perfectly obedient to your pleaſure.

Theo. Well then, I come to tell thee, that *Varanes*,
Of all mankind, is neareſt to my heart.
I love him, dear *Eudoſia*; and to prove
That love on trial, all my blood's too little;
Ev'n thee, if I were ſure to die this moment ‡
With my laſt breath I would bequeath him thee.

Athen. Then you are pleas'd, my lord, to yield me to him.

Theo. No, my *Eudoſia*, no, I will not yield thee
While I have life; for worlds I will not yield thee:
Yet, thus far I'm engag'd to let thee know,
He loves thee, *Athenais*, more than ever;
He languiſhes, deſpairs, and dies like me;
And I have paſs'd my word that he ſhall ſee thee.

Athen. Ah, ſir! what have you done againſt yourſelf
And me?——why have you paſs'd your fatal word?
Why will you truſt me, who am now afraid
To truſt myſelf? —Why do you leave me naked
To an aſſault, who had made proof my virtue
With this ſure guard, never to ſee him more!
For, Oh! with trembling agonies I ſpeak it,

† I'm ſtrong and well; but when thou'rt gone, I'm nothing.

‡ (As heav'n alone can tell how far my fate
Is off) O thou, my ſoul's moſt tender joy,

I cannot ſee a prince whom once I lov'd,
Bath'd in his tears, and gaſping at my feet, *
Without a ſorrow that perhaps may end me.

Theo. Oh, ye ſeverer pow'rs! too cruel fate!
Did ever love tread ſuch a maze before?
Yet, *Athenais*, ſtill I truſt thy virtue:
But if thy bleeding heart cannot refrain,
Give, give thyſelf away; yet ſtill remember,
That moment *Theodoſius* is no more——

[*Exit* Theodoſius.

Athen. Now, glory, now, if ever thou didſt work
In woman's mind, aſſiſt me——Oh, my heart! †
Down, down, I ſay; think on thy injuries,
Thy wrongs, thy wrongs!—'Tis well—my eyes are dry,
And all within my boſom now is ſtill.

Enter Varanes *leaning on* Aranthes.

Ha! is this he? or is't *Varanes'* ghoſt? ‡
Trembling and pale: I muſt not dare to view him:
For, Oh, I feel his melancholy here,
And fear I ſhall too ſoon partake his ſickneſs.

Var. Thus to the angry gods, offending mortals,
Made ſenſible, by ſome ſevere affliction,
How all their crimes are regiſter'd in Heav'n, *
Thus the poor penitents with fear approach
The rev'rend ſhrines, and thus for mercy bow; [*Kneels.*
Thus melting too, they waſh the hallow'd earth,
And groan to be forgiven———

O

* In all the violent trances of deſpair,

† Why doſt thou throb, as if thou wert a breaking?

‡ He looks as if he had beſpoke his grave,

* In that nice court how no raſh word eſcapes,
But ev'n extravagant thoughts are all ſet down;

O empreſs! O *Eudoſia!* ſuch you're now:
Theſe are your titles, and I muſt not dare
Ever to call you *Athenais* more.

Athen. Riſe, riſe, my lord, let me intreat you, riſe;
I will not hear you in that humble poſture;
Riſe, or I muſt withdraw——The world will bluſh
For you and me, ſhould it behold a prince,
Sprung from immortal *Cyrus*, on his knees
Before the daughter of a poor philoſopher.

Var. 'Tis juſt, ye righteous gods, my doom is juſt;
Nor will I ſtrive to deprecate her anger.
If poſſible, I'll aggravate my crime,
That ſhe may rage till ſhe has broke my heart; †
For all I now deſire——
Is to fall dead without a wound before her.

Athen. Oh, ye known ſounds! but I muſt ſteel my ſoul.
[*Aſide.* ‡

Var. Not worth a word, a look, or one regard!
Is then the nature of my fault ſo heinous,
That when I come to take my eternal leave,
You'll not vouchſafe to view me? This is ſcorn
Which the fair ſoul of gentle *Athenais*
Would ne'er have harbour'd—yet, dear lady, frown not, *
Give me a patient hearing; for however
I talk of death, and ſeem to loath my life,

† For all I now deſire, and let the gods,
Theſe cruel gods that join to my undoing,
Be witneſſes to this unnatural wiſh!

‡ Methinks theſe robes ſeem too heavy

* Would ne'er have harbour'd——
O! for the ſake of him, whom you ere long
Shall hold as faſt as now your wiſhes form him,

I would delib'rate with my fate a while,
With ſnatching glances eye thee to the laſt,
Pauſe o'er a loſs like that of *Athenais*,
And parley with my ruin.

Athen. Speak, my lord;
To hear you is the emperor's command,
And, for that cauſe, I readily obey.

Var. The emperor, the emperor's command!
And for that cauſe ſhe readily obeys!
I thank you, madam, that, on any terms,
You condeſcend to hear me——
Know, then, *Eudoſia:* Ah, rather let me call thee
By the lov'd name of *Athenais* ſtill!
That name that I ſo often have invok'd; †
So oft at midnight ſigh'd among the groves;
(The rivers murmur, and the echo's burden) ‡
By that dear name, I make this proteſtation, *
I love thee——more than ever——
With conſcious bluſhes too, (now help me, gods!)
Help me to tell her, though to my confuſion, ‖
I lay the *Perſian* crown before her feet.

Athen. My lord, I thank you; and t' expreſs thoſe thanks,
As nobly as you offer 'em, I return
The gift you make: nor will I now upbraid you
With the example of the emperor;
Not but I know 'tis that which draws you on,
Thus to deſcend beneath your majeſty,

And

† And which was once auſpicious to my vows:

‡ Which every bird could ſing, and wind did bear!

* By all that's good on earth, or bleſt in heav'n,
I ſwear I love thee more, far more, than ever.

‖ And everlaſting ſhame; yet I muſt tell her,

And ſwell the daughter of a poor philoſopher
With hopes of being great.

Var. Ah, madam! Ah, you wrong me! by the gods,
I had repented, ere I knew the emp'ror——

Athen. You find, perhaps, too late, that *Athenais*,
However ſlighted for her birth and fortune,
Has ſomething in her perſon and her virtue,
Worth the regard of emperors themſelves:
And, to return the compliment you gave
My father, *Leontine*, that poor philoſopher,
Whoſe utmoſt glory is t' have been your tutor,
I here proteſt, by virtue and by glory,
I ſwear, by Heav'n, and all the pow'rs divine,
Th' abandon'd daughter of that poor old man
Shall ne'er be ſeated on the throne of *Cyrus*.

Var. Oh, death to all my hopes! what haſt thou ſworn,
To turn me wild? Ah, curſed throne of *Cyrus!*
Would thou hadſt been o'erturn'd, and laid in duſt;
His crown too thunderſtruck; my father; all
The *Perſian* race, like poor *Darius*, ruin'd,
Blotted, and ſwept for ever from the world,
When firſt ambition blaſted thy remembrance——

Athen. O Heav'n! I had forgot the baſe affront
Offer'd by this proud man——— *
He had deſign'd to bribe my father's virtue,
And, by unlawful means——
Fly from my ſight, leſt I become a fury, †
Fly, fly, *Varanes!* fly this ſacred place,

* Offered by this proud man; a wrong ſo great,
It is removed beyond all hope of mercy;

† And break thoſe rules of temp'rance I propos'd:

Where virtue and religion are profeſs'd. *
In foreign courts thou'lt find a thouſand beauties
That will comply for gold; for gold they'll weep;
For gold be fond—as if they lov'd indeed. †
Away——Away——*Varanes.*
Var. I am going——— ‡
[*He returns back afterwards, as he was departing from her.*]
Yet when I'm dead, if, as thou doſt return
With happy *Theodoſius* from the temple;
If, as thou go'ſt in triumph through the ſtreets,
Thou chance to meet the cold *Varanes* there,
Borne by his friends to his eternal home,
Stop then, O *Athenais!* and behold me:
Say, as thou hang'ſt about the emp'ror's neck,
Alas, my lord! this ſight is worth our pity.
If to thoſe pitying words thou'lt add a tear, ‖ If

* This city will not harbour infidels,
Traitors to chaſtity, licentious princes.
Be gone, I ſay, thou can'ſt not here be ſafe;
Fly to imperial libertines abroad:

† For gold be fond, as *Athenais* was,
And charm thee ſtill, as if they lov'd indeed.
Thou'lt find enough companions too for riot:
Luxuriant all, and royal as thy ſelf,
Tho' thy lewd vices ſhould reſound to heav'n——
Art thou not gone yet?
Var. No, I'm charm'd to hear you:
O from my ſoul I do confeſs myſelf
The very blot of honour; I'm more black
Than thou, in all thy heat of juſt revenge,
With all thy glorious eloquence canſt make me.
Athen. Away, *Varanes!*

‡ Nay, by the gods, I do not aſk thee pardon,
Nor, while I live, will I implore thy mercy:

‖ Or if one parting groan——If poſſible,
If the good gods will grant my ſoul the freedom,
I'll leave my ſhroud, and wake from death to thank thee.

If poſſible——if the kind fates will let me,
I'll wake from death to thank you for your goodneſs.
Athen. He ſhakes my reſolution from the bottom;
My bleeding heart too ſpeaks in his behalf,
And ſays, my virtue has been too ſevere.
Var. Farewel, O Queen!——no longer, *Athenais!* †
I will not call thee by that tender name,
Since cold deſpair begins to freeze my boſom,
And all my pow'rs are now reſolv'd on death.
'Tis ſaid, that from my youth I have been raſh, ‡
Choleric and hot; but let the gods bear witneſs
How calmly now I bear my diſappointments.
Since 'tis ſo doom'd by fate, that I muſt loſe you,
For your own peace, when I am laid in earth,
Forget that e'er *Varanes* had a being;
Turn all your ſoul to *Theodoſius'* boſom.
Continue, gods, their days, and make them long!
Lucina, wait upon their fruitful *Hymen*,
And many children, beauteous as their mother,
And pious as the father, make 'em ſmile!
Athen. O Heav'ns!
Var. Farewel——I'll trouble you no more;
The malady that's lodg'd within grows ſtronger:
I feel the ſhock of my approaching fate; *
Nor can I utter more, if you ſhould aſk me.
Thy arm, *Aranthes*—Oh, farewel for ever!——

† *Var.* Farewell! O empreſs: no *Athenais* now;

‡ Chol'ric, and hot; but let the gods now judge
By my laſt wiſh, if ever patient man
Did calmly bear ſo great a loſs as mine:
Since 'tis ſo doom'd by fate, you muſt be wedded;

* My heart too trembles at his diſtant march;

Athen. *Varanes*, ſtay; and ere you go for ever,
Let me unfold my heart.
Var. O *Athenais!*
What further cruelty haſt thou in ſtore
To add to what I ſuffer?
Athen. Since 'tis doom'd
That we muſt part, let's part as lovers ſhould;
As thoſe that have lov'd long, and have lov'd well.
Var. Art thou ſo good! †
Athen. Firſt, from my ſoul, I pity and forgive you.
I pardon you that little haſty error,
Which yet has been the ruin of us both. ‡
And let this ſorrow witneſs for my heart
How eagerly I wiſh it had not been. *
Farewel! moſt lovely, and moſt lov'd of men——
Why comes this dying paleneſs o'er thy face?
Why wander thus thy eyes? Why doſt thou bend,
As if the fatal weight of death were on thee!
Var. Speak yet a little more; for, by the gods,
And as I prize theſe fleeting, happy moments,

† *Var.* Art thou ſo good? O *Athenais*, Oh!

‡ Which yet has been the cauſe of both our ruins.

* And, ſince I cannot keep it, take it all:
Take all the love, O prince, I ever bore you:
Or, if 'tis poſſible, I'll give you more;
Your noble carriage forces this confeſſion:
I rage, I burn, I bleed, I die for love;
I am diſtracted with this world of paſſion.
Var. Gods! cruel gods! take notice I forgive you.
Athen. Alas! my lord, my weaker tender ſex
Has not your manly patience, cannot curb
This fury in; therefore I let it looſe:
Spite of my rigid duty, I will ſpeak
With all the dearneſs of a dying lover.

I ſwear, O *Athenais!* all is well. *

Athen. I doubt it, dear *Varanes*,——and I fear——
Yet, if thou dy'ſt, I ſhall not long be from thee. §
Oh, I could preſs him to my heart! Farewel!
And as a dying pledge of my laſt love,
Take this, which all thy pray'rs could never win.
[*She embraces him.*
What have I done? Oh, lead me, lead me, *Delia!*
Ah, prince, farewel! angels protect and guard thee!

Var. Turn back, O *Athenais!* and behold me;
Hear my laſt words, and then farewel for ever.
Thou haſt undone me by this laſt confeſſion; †
Yet I muſt ſee you marry'd to another.
Can there be any plague, or hell like this!
O *Athenais!* whither ſhall I turn me?
You've brought me back to life: but, Oh! what life? ‡
As one who from a trance revives too late,
And waking views the horrors of his fate;
The wretch explores the precincts of his vault,
With grief, deſpair, and rage to madneſs wrought:
To wait for famine's ſlow relief diſdains,
Then ſprings aloft, reſolved to end his pains,
And ſmears the diſmal pavement with his brains.

END of ACT the Fourth.

* O never better.

§ One more farewell, and take theſe laſt embraces.

† You ſay, you ſwear, you love me more than ever:

‡ T'a life more terrible than thouſand deaths.
Like one that had been buried in a trance,
With racking ſtarts, he wakes, and gazes round,
Forc'd by deſpair his whirling limbs to wound,
And bellow like a ſpirit under ground;
Still urg'd by fate, to turn, to toſs, and rave
Tormented, daſh'd, and broken in the grave. [*Exeunt.*

ACT V.

Athenais *dreſſed in imperial robes, and crowned. A table, with a bowl of poiſon.* Delia *attending.*

Athen. A Midnight marriage! muſt I to the temple,
Thus, at the murd'rer's hour? 'Tis wond'rous ſtrange!
But ſo, thou ſay'ſt, my father has commanded,
And that's a mighty reaſon.

Delia. The emp'ror, in compaſſion to the prince,
Who might, perhaps, fly to extravagance, *
Contriv'd, by this cloſe marriage, to deceive him. †

Athen. 'Tis done—haſte, *Delia*, haſte—come, bring thy lute,
And ſing my waſtage to immortal joys,
Methinks I can't but ſmile at my own bravery;
Thus from the loweſt fortune rais'd to empire,
Crown'd, and adorn'd, worſhip'd by half the earth,
While a young monarch dies for my embraces.
Yet now to wave the glories of the world——

* If he in public ſhould reſolve t' eſpouſe you.

† *Athen.* Go, fetch thy lute, and ſing thoſe lines I gave thee,
Lo, now I am alone: yet my ſoul ſhakes:
For where this dreadful draught may carry me,
The Heav'ns can only tell; yet I'm reſolv'd
To drink it off in ſpite of conſequence.
Whiſper him, O ſome angel! what I'm doing;
By ſympathy of ſoul let him too tremble,
To hear my wond'rous faith, my wond'rous love:
Whoſe ſpirit not content with an ovation
Of ling'ring fate, with triumph thus reſolv'd,
Thus, in the rapid chariot of the ſoul,
To mount, and dare as never woman dar'd. [*Drinks.*

O my *Varanes!* though my birth's unequal,
My virtue, ſure, has richly recompens'd,
And quite out-gone example! *

Enter Pulcheria.

Pulch. How fares my dear *Eudoſia!* Ha! thou look'ſt,
Or elſe the tapers cheat my ſight, like one
That's fitter for thy tomb, than *Cæſar*'s bed:
A fatal ſorrow dims thy ſhaded eyes,

And,

* S O N G.

Ah! cruel bloody fate,
What canſt thou now do more?
Alas! 'tis all too late,
Philander to reſtore:
Why ſhould the heav'nly pow'rs perſuade
Poor mortals to believe,
That they guard us here,
And reward us there,
Yet all our joys deceive?

Her poniard then ſhe took,
And held it in her hand;
And, with a dying look,
Cry'd, Thus I fate command;
Philander! ah! my love, I come,
To meet thy ſhade below;
Ah! I come, ſhe cry'd
With a wound ſo wide,
There needs no ſecond blow.

In purple waves her blood
Ran ſtreaming down the floor;
Unmov'd ſhe ſaw the flood,
And bleſs'd her dying hour:
Philander! ah, *Philander!* ſtill
The bleeding *Phyllis* cry'd:
She wept a while,
And forc'd a ſmile;
Then clos'd her eyes, and dy'd.

And, in despite of all thy ornaments,
Thou seem'st to me the ghost of *Athenais*.

Athen. And what's the punishment, my dear *Pulcheria*,
What torments are allotted those sad spirits,
Who, groaning with the burden of despair,
No longer will endure the cares of life,
But boldly set themselves at liberty, *
Like pris'ners 'scap'd abroad without a guide.

Pulch. No more o' that; *Atticus* shall resolve thee.
But see, he waits thee from the emperor;
Thy father too attends.

Enter Leontine, Atticus, *&c.*

Leon. Come. *Athenais*—Ha! what now, in tears?
Oh, fall of honour! but, no more: I charge thee,
I charge thee, as thou ever hop'st my blessing,
Or fear'st my curse, to banish from thy soul
All thoughts, if possible, the memory
Of that ungrateful prince. †
Attend me to the temple on this instant,
To make the emp'ror thine. ‡

Athen. Yes, sir, I'll go——
Let me but dry my eyes, and I will go——
Eudosia, this unhappy bride, shall go:

Thus,

* Through the dark caves of death to wander on,
Like wilder'd travellers without a guide,
Eternal rovers in the gloomy maze,
Where scarce the twilight of an infant moon,
By a faint glimmer chequ'ring through the trees,
Reflects to dismal view the walking ghosts;
And never hope to reach the blessed fields?

† Of that ungrateful prince that has undone thee.

‡ To make the emp'ror thine, this night to wed him,
And lye within his arms.

Thus, like a victim, crown'd, and doom'd to bleed,
I'll wait you to the altar. *

Leon. Thou art my child again.

Athen. But do not, ſir, imagine any charms
Or threat'nings ſhall compel me
Never to think of poor *Varanes* more:
No, my *Varanes*, no——
While I have breath, I muſt remember thee. † [*Exeunt.*

Scene changes to the Apartment of Varanes.

Var. 'Tis night, dead night; and weary Nature lies
So faſt, as if ſhe never were to riſe:
No breath of wind now whiſpers thro' the trees;
No noiſe at land, nor murmur in the ſeas:
Lean wolves forget to howl at night's pale noon;
No wakeful dogs bark at the ſilent moon,

* I'll wait you to the altar, wed the Emp'ror,
And, if he pleaſes, lie within his arms.

† To thee alone I will my thoughts confine,
And all my meditations ſhall be thine:
The image of thy woes my ſoul ſhall fill;
Fate, and my end, and thy remembrance ſtill.
As in ſome poplar ſhade the nightingale,
With piercing moans, does her loſt young bewail,
Which the rough hind, obſerving as they lay
Warm in their downy neſt, had ſtol'n away;
But ſhe in mournful ſounds does ſtill complain,
Sings all the night, tho' all her ſongs are vain,
And ſtill renews her miſerable ſtrain:
So, my *Varanes*, till my death comes on,
Shall ſad *Eudoſia* thy dear loſs bemoan.

[Exeunt *Athenais*, *Atticus*, &c.

The ſimile of the Nightingale, though pretty, is too long, and rather improper here; beſides that, it is not original, being an indifferent tranſlation from *Virgil*. See the 4th Georgic, and *Orpheus*——There is no reſemblance in the circumſtances, beſides the general one of a beloved object loſt.

Nor bay the ghosts that glide with horror by,
To view the caverns where their bodies lie: ‡
The stars, Heav'n's centry, wink, and seem to die.
Such universal silence spreads below,
Thro' the vast shades where I am doom'd to go:
Nor shall I need a violence to wound;
The storm is here, that drives me on the ground;
Sure means to make the soul and body part,
A burning fever, and a broken heart,
What, hoa, *Aranthes!*——
I sent thee to the empress.——

Enter Aranthes. *

Aranth. You did, my lord; but, Oh,
I fear to give you an account!

Var. Alas,
Aranthes! I am got on t'other side
Of this bad world, and now am past all fear.
O ye avenging gods! is there a plague
Among your hoarded bolts, and heaps of vengeance,
Beyond the mighty loss of *Athenais?*
'Tis contradiction—Speak then, speak, *Aranthes*;
For all misfortune, if compar'd with that,
Will make *Varanes* smile——

Aranth. My lord, the empress,
Crown'd, and adorn'd with the imperial robes,
At this dead time of night, with silent pomp,

A2

‡ The ravens perch, and no presages give,
Nor to the windows of the dying cleave:
The owls forget to scream; no midnight sound
Calls drowsy Echo from the hollow ground:
In vaults the walking fires extinguish'd lie;

* I sent thee to the apartment of *Athenais*:
I sent thee, did I not? to be admitted.

As they design'd from all to keep it secret,
(But chiefly, sure, from you) I say, the empress
Is now conducted by the general,
Atticus, and her father, to the temple,
There to espouse the emp'ror *Theodosius*.
Var. Say'st thou? Is't certain? Ha!
Aranth. Most certain, sir! I saw them in procession. †
Var. Marry'd—She has kept her promise now indeed;
And, Oh! her nice revenge, and pointed anger
Have reach'd their end. No, my *Aranthes*, no;
I will not stay the lazy execution
Of a slow fever. Reach thy hand, and swear
By all the love and duty that thou ow'st me,
T' observe the last commands that I shall give thee; ‡
Presume not to oppose me with thy reasons;
For what my thought has doom'd, my hand shall seal.
I charge thee, hold this steel against my heart, *
Fix'd as the fate that throws me on the point. ‖
Arant. What you command is terrible, but sacred;
And to atone for this too cruel duty,
My lord, I'll follow you——
Var. I charge thee not:
But, when I'm dead, take the attending slaves,
And bear me, with my blood distilling down,

† *Var.* Give me thy sword. Malicious Fate! O Fortune!
O giddy Chance! O turn of love and greatness!

‡ Stir not against my purpose, as thou fear'st
My anger and disdain; not dare t' oppose me
With troublesome, unnecessary, formal reasons;

* I charge thee hold it stedfast to my heart,

‖ Though I have liv'd a *Persian*, I will fall
As fair, as fearless, and as full resolv'd,
As any *Greek* or *Roman* of 'em all.

Straight to the temple; lay me, O *Aranthes!*
Lay my cold corſe at *Athenais'* feet,
And ſay——(Oh! why, why do my eyes run o'er?)
Say, with my lateſt gaſp I groan'd for pardon.
Juſt here, my friend, hold faſt, and fix the ſword;
I feel the art'ry where the life-blood flows;*
It heaves againſt the point——Now, friend, farewel.

[*He dies.*

SCENE, *the outward part of the Temple.*

Enter Pulcheria *and* Julia *at one door*, Marcian *and* Lucius *at another.*

Pulch. Look, *Julia*, ſee, the penſive *Marcian* comes.
'Tis to my wiſh; I muſt no longer vex him,
Leſt he ſhould leave the court indeed. He looks
As if ſome mighty ſecret work'd within him,
And labour'd for a vent—Inſpire me, woman!
That what my ſoul deſires above the world,
May ſeem impos'd and forc'd on my affections.

Luc. I ſay ſhe loves you, and ſhe ſtays to hear it
From your own mouth.†——
My lord, why are you ſilent?
Take heed, ſir, mark your opportunity;
For if the woman lays it in your way,
And you o'erſee it, ſhe is loſt for ever.

Marc.

* I feel the art'ry where the life-blood lies;
It heaves againſt the point——Now, O ye gods,
If for the greatly wretched you have room,
Prepare my place, for dauntleſs, lo, I come!
The Force of Love thus makes the mortal wound,
And *Athenais* ſends me to the ground. [*Kills himſelf.*

† From your own mouth; now, in the name of all
The gods at once, my lord, why are you ſilent?

Marc. Madam, I come to take my laſt farewel.
Your doom has baniſh'd me, and I obey; *
I leave the place where firſt your bounty rais'd me,
And drew this earth-born vapour to the clouds.
For as the gods ordain'd it, I have loſt,
I know not how, through ignorance, your grace;
And now the exhalation of my glory
Is quite conſum'd, and vaniſh'd into air.

Pulch. Proceed, ſir.

Marc. Yet let thoſe gods that doom'd me to diſpleaſe you
Be witneſſes how much I honour you——
Thus worſhipping, I ſwear, by your bright ſelf,
I leave this infamous court with more content
Than fools and flatt'rers ſeek it: but, O Heav'n!
I cannot go, if ſtill your hate purſues me;
Yes, I declare, it is impoſſible
To go to baniſhment without your pardon.

Pulch. You have it, *Marcian.* Is there ought beſide,
That you would ſpeak? for I am free to hear.

Marc. Since I ſhall never ſee you more, what hinders,
But my laſt words ſhould here proteſt the truth?
Know then, imperial princeſs, matchleſs woman,
Since firſt you caſt your eyes upon my meanneſs,
Ev'n till you rais'd me to this envy'd height,
I have in ſecret lov'd you——

Pulch. Is this *Marcian?*

Marc. You frown; but I am ſtill prepar'd for all.

* The court and I ſhake hands, and now we part,
Never to ſee each other more: the court
Where I was born, and bred a gentleman;
No more, 'till your illuſtrious bounty rais'd me,
And drew the earth-born vapour to the clouds.

I say I lov'd you, and I love you still—— *
Methinks the very genius of old *Rome*
Flames in your eyes; our thoughts, too, are akin,
Ambitious, fierce, and burn alike for glory.
Now, by the gods, I lov'd you in your fury—— †
Madam, I've spoke my heart, and could say more—— ‡
Farewel—a worthier general may succeed me,
But none more faithful to the emp'ror's interest,
Than him you're pleas'd to call the traitor *Marcian*.

Pulch. Come back; you've subtilly play'd your part indeed:
For first, the emp'ror, whom you lately school'd,
Restores you your commission; next, commands you,
As you're a subject, not to leave the court;
Next, but, O Heav'n! which way shall I express
His cruel pleasure; he that is so mild
In all things else, yet obstinate in this, ‖
Commands me, as I dread his high displeasure,
O *Marcian!* to receive you as my husband.

Marc. Ha, *Lucius!* what, what does my fate intend?

Luc. Pursue her, sir; 'tis as I said; she yields,
And rages that you follow her no faster.

Pulch.

* More than my life, and equal to my glory.
Methinks the warring spirit that inspires
This frame, the very genius of old *Rome!*
That makes me talk without the fear of death,
And drives my daring soul to acts of honour.

† In all the thunder that quite riv'd my hopes;
I lov'd you most, ev'n when you did destroy me.

‡ But that I see it grieves you; your high blood
Frets at the arrogance and saucy pride
Of this bold vagabond: may the gods forgive me!

‖ Spight of my tears, my birth, and my disdain.

Pulch. Is then, at laſt, my great authority,
And my intruſted pow'r, declin'd to this?
Yet, Oh, my fate! what way can I avoid it?
He charg'd me ſtraight to wait him to the temple,
And there reſolve, O *Marcian*, on this marriage.
Now, generous ſoldier, as you're truly noble,
Help me to looſe this more than Gordian knot. *

Marc. Since, then, the emp'ror has reſolv'd you mine,
For which I will for ever thank the gods, †
I take him at his word, and claim his promiſe;
The empire of the world ſhall not redeem you.
Nay, weep not, madam, though my outſide's rough,
Yet, by thoſe eyes, your ſoldier has a heart,
Compaſſionate and tender as a virgin's;
Ev'n now it bleeds to ſee thoſe falling ſorrows;
Perhaps this grief may move the emperor
To a repentance: come, then, to the trial;
For, by my arms, my life, and dearer honour,
If you go back, when giv'n me by his hand,
In diſtant wars my fate I will deplore,
And *Marcian*'s name ſhall ne'er be heard of more. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE

* Oh, help me forth, loſt in this labyrinth;
Help me to looſe this more than Gordian knot,
And make me and yourſelf for ever happy.
Mar. Madam, I'll ſpeak as briefly as I can,
And as a Soldier ought: The only way
To help this knot is yet to tie it faſter.

† And make this holiday throughout my life,

SCENE *the laſt, a Magnificent Temple.* *

Theodoſius *and* Athenais *ſtanding near an Alter.* Marcian, Pulcheria, Leontine, *Attendants, &c.*

Enter Aranthes *and others bearing the body of* Varanes.

Aranth. Where is the empreſs? †
By Fate I'm ſent to tell that cruel Beauty,
She has robb'd the world of Fame—her eyes have given
A blaſt to *Perſia*'s hope———
Behold him there, nipp'd in his flow'ry morn,
Compell'd to break his promiſe of a day,
A day that conqueſt would have made her boaſt. ‖
Behold him, madam. ‡

Ath. Dead——alas!—*Varanes!*

Theo. O ye eternal powers!——
That guide the world, why do you ſhock our reaſon
With acts like theſe, that lay our thoughts in duſt?
Forgive me, Heav'n! this ſtart, or elevate
Imagination more, and make it nothing.
But ſpeak, *Aranthes*, (tears will choak my voice §)
The manner of his fate; ſay how he died?

Aranth.

* SCENE IV. *The Temple.*

Theodoſius, Athenais, Atticus *joining their hands.*—Marcian, Pulcheria, Lucius, Julia, Delia, *&c.* Leontine.

Atti. The more than Gordian knot is ty'd,
Which Death's ſtrong arm ſhall ne'er divide;
For when to bliſs ye wafted are,
Your Spirits ſhall be wedded there;
Waters are loſt, and fires will die,
But love alone can Fate defy.

† *Enter* Aranthes *with the Body of* Varanes.

Aranth. Where is the Empreſs? where ſhall I find *Eudoſia*?

‡ A blaſt to the big bloſſom of the war;

‖ Behold her laurel wither'd to the root,
Canker'd and kill'd by *Athenais*' ſcorn.

Ath. Dead, dead *Varanes!*

§ Alas! alas, *Varanes!*——But ſpeak, *Aranthes*,
The manner of his fate: groans choke my words:
But ſpeak, and we will anſwer thee with tears.

Aranth. His fever would, no doubt, by this have done
What, ſome few minutes paſt, his ſword perform'd. *
He heard from me of theſe your ſecret nuptials;
But, Oh! my lord, had you beheld his grief,
Or had your empreſs ſeen him in thoſe moments,
When from his dying eyes, ſwol'n to the brim,
The big round drops roll'd down his manly face,
While from his hollow breaſt a murm'ring ſound
Of groans ruſh'd forth, and echo'd—All is well.
Then had you ſeen him———
Ruſh on the ſword I held againſt his breaſt,
And dye it to the hilts, with theſe laſt words,
Bear me to *Athenais.*

Athenais. Give me way, †
And here, Oh! here, on his cold, bloody breaſt
Thus let me breathe my laſt.

Theo. O empreſs!—what, what can theſe tranſports mean? ‡

Athen. Forgive me, ſir, this laſt reſpect I pay
Theſe ſad remains——and, O thou mighty ſpirit,
If yet thou art not mingled with the ſtars,
Look down, and hear the wretched *Athenais,*
When thou ſhalt know, before I gave conſent
To this indecent marriage, I had taken
Into my veins a cold and deadly draught. ‖

* He heard from me your progreſs to the temple,
How you deſign'd at midnight to deceive him
By a clandeſtine marriage: but, my lord,
Had you beheld his racks at my relation;

† I have moſt ſtrictly kept my promiſe with you:
I am your bride, and you can aſk no more;
Or, if you did, I'm paſt the pow'r to give.

‡ Are theſe our nuptials? theſe my promis'd joys?

‖ Which ſoon would render me, alas! unfit
For the warm joys of an imperial lover,
And make me ever thine, yet keep my word
With *Theodoſius,* wilt thou not forgive me?

Theo. Poiſon'd, to free thee from the emperor!
O *Athenais*, thou haſt done a deed
That tears my heart!—I left thee to thy choice, *
And you requite me thus.

Athen. O pardon me,
I lay my dying body at your feet——
And beg, my lord, with my laſt ſighs entreat you,
T' impute my fault, if 'tis a fault, to love—— †
Remember too,
I begg'd you would not let me ſee the prince,
Preſaging what has happen'd. ‡

Leo. "O my child!
"'Tis I'm to blame, who urg'd this fatal marriage.
"Alas! alas! my daughter!"

Theo. Ah! ſhe is going!—ſee her languiſhing eyes
Draw in their beams—the ſleep of death is on her. ‖

Athen.

* That tears my heart! What have I done againſt thee,
That thou ſhouldſt brand me thus with infamy
And everlaſting ſhame? Thou might'ſt have made
Thy choice without this cruel act of death;
I left thee to thy will, and, in requital,
Thou'ſt murder'd all my fame——

† And the ingratitude of *Athenais*
To her too cruel ſtars: Remember too,
Too cruel ſtars is too hackney'd a phraſe, and well ridiculed by *Prior*:
"But if weak women go aſtray,
"Their ſtars are more in fault than they."

‡ Preſaging what has happen'd; yet my word,
As to our nuptials, was inviolable.

‖ *Athen.* Farewell, my lord. Alas! alas, *Varanes!*
T'embrace thee now is not immodeſty;
Or, if it were, I think my bleeding heart
Would make me, criminal in death, to claſp thee,
Break all the tender niceties of honour

To

Athen. "Yet, *Theodoſius*, ſay that thou forgiv'ſt me.
"My father——Oh!——Farewel!" [*She dies.*

Theo. Alas! ſweet maid!
Are theſe my nuptials?——theſe my promis'd joys?
"Yet one laſt kiſs——thoſe lips are lovely ſtill.
"Ah me!——my dream of ſhort-liv'd bliſs is fled!
"O fleeting ſtate of periſhing delights!"

Pulch. "Leave this ſad ſpectacle. Retire, my brother."

Theo. "Here let me vent my ſorrows o'er this lov'd one."

Marcian. "Hear me, my lord."

Theo. (riſing) "O *Marcian*, peace awhile.
"Anon I'll follow thee——chide not my weakneſs,
"Henceforth I'll drive this ſoftneſs from my breaſt.
"And quit thoſe toys that late my ſoul poſſeſt:
"Inſpir'd by thee I'll ſeek a nobler aim,
"And point my ſteps to virtue, and to fame."

[*Exeunt omnes.*

FINIS.

To fold thee thus, and warm thee into life:
For, oh! what man like him could woman move!
Oh, prince belov'd! Oh, ſpirit moſt divine!
Thus, by my death, I give thee all my love,
And ſeal my ſoul and body ever thine——— [*Dies.*

Theo. O *Marcian!* O *Pulcheria!* did not the Pow'r
Whom we adore, plant all his thunderbolts
Againſt ſelf-murd'rers, I would periſh too:
But, as I am, I ſwear to leave the empire:
To thee, my ſiſter, I bequeath the world,
And, yet a gift more great, a gallant *Marcian*.
On then, my friend; now ſhew thy *Roman* ſpirit:
As to her ſex fair *Athenais* was,
Be thou to thine a pattern of true honour.
Thus we'll atone for all the preſent crimes,
That yet it may be ſaid in aftertimes,
No age with ſuch examples could compare,
So great, ſo good, ſo virtuous, and ſo fair! [*Exeunt omnes.*

POSTSCRIPT.

THERE ſeems no neceſſity that *Theodoſius* ſhould retire from the world upon this occaſion, however he may be grieved and diſappointed to a great degree; and as hiſtory never mentions his quitting the imperial crown, the event of this tragedy, as now repreſented, is more conformable to truth.

The character of *Varanes* is entirely a fiction of Mr. *Lee*, who has work'd up this part with great ſpirit. Indeed, without the *Perſian* prince and his beautiful miſtreſs, this tragedy would be nothing. The youthful fire of *Varanes* is well contraſted by the mildneſs of *Theodoſius*. As to the young maiden, who is the principal object of this Drama, her extreme lovelineſs, and endowments of mental worth, ſufficiently juſtify the violent paſſion which both princes have conceived for her.

According to the original ſtory, as delivered down by time, there were ſome romantic circumſtances in the life of *Athenais* and her firſt meeting with the emperor, although entirely different to Mr. *Lee*'s account.

Some extravagant paſſages in the ſpeeches of *Marcian* are omitted. The well-meaning patriotic bluntneſs of a Military character, unuſed to courts, (as he is deſcribed to be) muſt apologize for *Marcian*'s behaviour in ſome inſtances, where the generoſity and latent virtues of *Theodoſius* are called forth by the roughneſs and plain dealing (not to call it preſumption) of the ſubject.

5 JA 53

OEDIPUS.

A

TRAGEDY,

WRITTEN BY

DRYDEN and LEE,

WITH SOME

FEW ALTERATIONS

Submitted to the Reader.

Damnat apud gentes, ſceleris non ſponte preacti,
OEdipodionidas, infelix Fabula, Thebas. LUCAN.

MDCCLXXXV.

Mr. DRYDEN's PREFACE.

THOUGH it be dangerous to raiſe too great expectation, eſpecially in works of this nature, where we are to pleaſe an unſatiable audience, yet 'tis reaſonable to prepoſſeſs them in favour of an author, and therefore both the prologue and epilogue informed you that *OEdipus* was the moſt celebrated piece of all antiquity: that *Sophocles*, not only the greateſt wit, but one of the greateſt men in *Athens*, made it for the ſtage at the public coſt, and that it had the reputation of being his maſter-piece, not only amongſt the ſeven of his which are ſtill remaining, but of the greater number which are periſhed. *Ariſtotle* has more than once admired it in his book of poetry; *Horace* has mentioned it; *Lucullus*, *Julius Cæſar*, and other noble *Romans*, have written on the ſame ſubject, though their poems are wholly loſt; but *Seneca*'s is ſtill preſerved. In our own age, *Corneille* has attempted it, and it appears by his preface, with great ſucceſs: but a judicious reader will eaſily obſerve how much the copy is inferior to the original. He tells you himſelf, that he owes a great part of his ſucceſs to the happy epiſode of *Theſeus* and *Dirce*; which is the ſame thing as if we ſhould acknowledge, that we were indebted for our good fortune to the underplot of *Adraſtus*, *Euridice*, and *Creon*. The truth is, he miſerably failed in the character of his hero. If he deſired that *OEdipus* ſhould be pitied, he ſhould have made him a better man. He forgot that *Sophocles* had taken care to ſhew him in his firſt entrance, a juſt, a merciful, a ſucceſsful, a religious prince; and, in ſhort, a father of his country; inſtead of theſe, he has drawn him ſuſpicious, deſigning,

more

more anxious of keeping the *Theban* crown, than ſolicitous for the ſafety of his people; hectored by *Theſeus*, contemned by *Dirce*, and ſcarce maintaining a ſecond part in his own tragedy. This was an error in the firſt concoction; and therefore never to be mended in the ſecond or third. He introduced a greater hero than *OEdipus* himſelf; for when *Theſeus* was once there, that companion of *Hercules* muſt yield to none. The poet was obliged to furniſh him with buſineſs, to make him an equipage ſuitable to his dignity, and, by following him too cloſe, to loſe his other King of *Brentford* in the crowd. *Seneca*, on the other ſide, as if there were no ſuch thing as nature to be minded in a play, is always running after pompous expreſſion, pointed ſentences, and philoſophical notions, more proper for the ſtudy than the ſtage. The *Frenchman* followed a wrong ſcent, and the *Roman* was abſolutely at cold hunting. All we could gather out of *Corneille* was, that an epiſode muſt be, but not his way; and *Seneca* ſupplied us with no new hint, but only a relation which he makes of his *Tireſias* raiſing the ghoſt of Laius, which is here performed in view of the audience; the rites and ceremonies ſo far his, as he agreed with antiquity, and the religion of the *Greeks:* but he himſelf was beholden to *Homer*'s *Tireſias* in the odyſſes for ſome of them, and the reſt have been collected from *Heliodore*'s Æthiopiques, and *Lucan*'s Erictho. *Sophocles*, indeed, is admirable every where; and therefore we have followed him as cloſe as poſſibly we could. But the *Athenian* theatre (whether more perfect than ours, is not now diſputed) had a perfection differing from ours. You ſee there in every act a ſingle ſcene, (or two at moſt) which manage the buſineſs of the play, and after that ſucceeds the chorus, which commonly takes up more time in ſinging, than there has been employed in ſpeaking: The principal perſona ppears almoſt conſtantly through the

the play; but the inferior parts ſeldom above once in the whole tragedy. The conduct of our ſtage is much more difficult, where we are obliged never to loſe any conſiderable character which we have once preſented. Cuſtom likewiſe has obtained, that we muſt form an underplot of ſecond perſons, which muſt be depending on the firſt, and their bye-walks muſt be like thoſe in a labyrinth, which all of them lead into the great parterre; or, like ſo many ſeveral lodging chambers, which have their outlets into the ſame gallery. Perhaps, after all, if we could think ſo, the ancient method, as it is the eaſieſt, is alſo the moſt natural, and the beſt. For variety, as it is managed, is too often ſubject to breed diſtraction; and while we would pleaſe too many ways, for want of art in the conduct, we pleaſe in none. But we have given you more already than was neceſſary for a preface, and, for ought we know, may gain no more by our inſtructions, than that politic nation is like to do, who have taught their enemies to fight ſo long, that at laſt they are in a condition to invade them.

Mr. DRYDEN's PROLOGUE.

WHEN *Athens* all the *Grecian* ſtates did guide,
And *Greece gave laws to all the world beſide*,
Then *Sophocles* and *Socrates* did ſit
Supreme in Wiſdom one, and one in Wit:
And Wit from Wiſdom differ'd not in thoſe,
But as 'twas ſung in verſe, or ſaid in proſe.
Then *OEdipus*, on crowded theatres,
Drew all admiring eyes, and liſt'ning ears:
The pleas'd ſpectator ſhouted every line,
The nobleſt, manlieſt, and the beſt deſign!
And every critic of each learned age,
By this juſt model has reform'd the ſtage.
Now, ſhould it fail, (as Heav'n avert our fear!)
Damn it in ſilence, leſt the world ſhould hear.
For were it known this poem did not pleaſe,
You might ſet up for perfect ſavages;
Your neighbours would not look on you as men,
But think the Nation all turn'd *Picts* again.
Faith, as you manage matters, 'tis not fit,
You ſhould ſuſpect yourſelves of too much wit.
Drive not the jeſt too far, but ſpare this piece:
And, for this once, be not more wiſe than *Greece*.
See twice; do not pell-mell to damning fall,
Like TRUE-BORN *Britons* who ne'er think at all.
Pray be adviſ'd; and though at *Mons* you won,
On pointed cannon do not always run.
With ſome reſpect to ancient wits proceed:
You take the four firſt councils for your creed,
But when you lay tradition wholly by,
And on the private ſpirit alone rely,
You turn fanatics in your poetry.
If, notwithſtanding all that we can ſay,
You needs will have your penn'worths of the play,
And come reſolv'd to damn, becauſe you pay,
Record it, in memorial of the fact,
The firſt play buried ſince the woollen act.

A

PROLOGUE to OEDIPUS,

As now reviſed.

BEHOLD a maſter-piece of wounds and wars,
And woes—and words—" that put out all the ſtars,"*
Murder and inceſt, plagues and every fury
That hell could hatch, by turns are brought before you;
And *Laius'* ſelf from *Erebus* profound,
Aſcends with ſteeds and car, and ghoſts around:
——But hold——all ſpirits to their place are ſent,
And *Laius* now ſleeps in his monument.
For this amendment, ſome perhaps will ſay
We thank you not——and you have ſpoil'd the play:
We've loſt a noble pantomime this way:
" The groans of ghoſts that cleave the ground with pain,"†
And grieve to view their native ſeats again;
The fiends are gone, that flames and ſulphur breathe
And dev'ls ent'ring from trap-doors beneath,
Theſe tricks, my friends, you ſcorn and diſbelieve.
It was not thus among the *Greeks* of old,
This tale of woe by *Sophocles* was told.
The fact was true; (as every ſtripling knows,
Who freſh from claſſic lore with *Homer* glows.)
For poets then, that chronicled the times,
Were fam'd for hiſtory as well as rhymes.

* " Words that put out the ſtars."

See *Lee's Alexander*, Act the 3d, where *Roxana* ſays,

" Paſſions, like the wind,
" Riſe up to heav'n, and put out all the ſtars."

† " The groans of ghoſts, &c."

A line in the incantations, which are here omitted, and this to preſerve probability.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MEN.

ŒDIPUS,	DIOCLES,
ADRASTUS,	PYRACMON,
CREON,	PHORBAS,
TIRESIAS,	DYMAS,
HÆMON,	ÆGEON,*
ALCANDER,	

WOMEN.

JOCASTA, MANTO.

EURYDICE,

Prieſt, Citizens, Attendants, *&c.*

SCENE, *THEBES.*

* The GHOST is here entirely omitted, together with the machinery attending on him.—No ſuch perſon is introduced by *Sophocles*, who wrote with great ſimplicity as well as dignity. The whole ſtory, as conducted by him, wears the appearance of probability, although the diſtreſs and the circumſtances attending the event of this drama are highly intereſting and uncommon.

OEDIPUS.

ACT I.*

The curtain riſes to a plaintive tune, repreſenting the miſeries of Thebes; *dead bodies appear at a diſtance in the ſtreets; ſome faintly go over the ſtage, others drop.*

Enter Alcander, Diocles, *and* Pyracmon.

Alc. METhinks we ſtand on ruins; nature ſhakes
About us, and the univerſal frame
So looſe, that it but wants another puſh
To leap from off its hinges. †
Pyr. And the ſeaſons
Lie all confus'd, and, by the Heav'ns neglected,
Forget themſelves. ‡
Alc. Hence murrains follow'd

* The 1ſt and 3d Acts of this Tragedy were written by Mr. *Dryden*, and the reſt by Mr. *Lee*, as may be traced by his ſtile, which abounds with images highly poetical, but often clouded by bombaſt.

† *Dioc.* No ſun to chear us; but a bloody globe
That rolls above; a bald and beamleſs fire;
His face o'er-grown with ſcurf. The Sun's ſick too;
Shortly he'll be an earth.

‡ Forget themſelves. Blind winter meets the ſummer
In his mid-way, and, ſeeing not his livery,
Has driv'n him headlong back: and the raw damps
With flaggy wings fly heavily about,
Scattering their peſtilential colds and rheums
Through all the lazy air.

On bleating flocks, and on the lowing herds:
At laſt, the malady
Grew more domeſtic, and the faithful dog
Dy'd at his maſter's feet.

Dioc. And next his maſter:
For all thoſe plagues which earth and air had brooded,
Firſt on inferior creatures try'd their force;
And laſt they ſeiz'd on man. *
How are we ſure we breathe not now our laſt, †
And that, next minute,
Our bodies, caſt into ſome common pit,
Shall not be built upon, and overlaid
By half a people?

Alc. There's a chain of cauſes
Link'd to effects; invincible neceſſity,
That whate'er is, could not but ſo have been;
That's my ſecurity.

Enter Creon.

Cre. So had it need, when all our ſtreets lie cover'd
With dead and dying men;

And

(* So *Homer* ſays in the beginning of the *Iliad*.
On mules and dogs th' infection firſt began,
And laſt the vengeful arrow fix'd in man.) Pope.

† *Pyr.* And then a thouſand deaths at once advanc'd,
And every dart took place. All was ſo ſudden,
That ſcarce a firſt man fell——One but began
To wonder, and ſtraight fell a wonder too;
A third who ſtoop'd to raiſe his dying friend,
Dropp'd in the pious act.——Heard you that groan?

[*Groan within.*

Dioc. A troop of ghoſts took flight together there:
Now Death's grown riotous, and will play no more
For ſingle ſtakes; but families and tribes.

And earth expoſes bodies on the pavement
More than ſhe hides in graves.
Betwixt the bride and bridegroom I have ſeen
The nuptial torch do common offices
Of marriage and of death.

Dioc. Now, *OEdipus*
(If he returns from war, our other plague)
Will ſcarce find half he left to grace his triumphs.

Pyr. A feeble Pæan will be ſung before him.

Alc. He would do well to bring the wives and children
Of conquer'd *Argians* to renew his *Thebes.*

Creo. May funerals meet him at the city gates
With their deteſted omen!

Dioc. Of his children.

Creo. Nay, though ſhe be my ſiſter, of his wife.

Alc. O that our *Thebes* might once again behold
A monarch *Theban* born!

Dioc. We might have had one.

Pyr. Yes, had the people pleas'd.

Creo. Come, you're my friends——
The Queen, my ſiſter, after *Laius'* death,
Fear'd to lie ſingle, and ſupply'd his place
With a young ſucceſſor.

Dioc. He much reſembles
Her former huſband too.

Alc. I always thought ſo.

Pyr. When twenty winters more have grizzled his black [locks,
He will be very *Laius*

Creo. So he will:
Mean time ſhe ſtands provided of a *Laius*
More young and vigorous too by twenty ſprings.

Theſe

Theſe women are ſuch cunning purveyors!
Mark, where their appetites have once been pleas'd,
The ſame reſemblance in a younger lover
Lies brooding in their fancies the ſame pleaſures,
And urges their remembrance to deſire.

Dioc. Had merit, not her dotage, been conſider'd,
Then *Creon* had been King: but *OEdipus!*
A ſtranger!——

Cre. That word, ſtranger, I confeſs,
Sounds harſhly in my ears.

Dioc. We are your creatures.
The people prone, as in all general ills,
To ſudden change; the King in wars abroad;
The Queen a woman weak, and unregarded; †
Euridice, the daughter of dead *Laius*,
A princeſs young, and beauteous, and unmarried.
Methinks, from theſe disjointed propoſitions
Something might be produced.

Cre. The gods have done
Their part, by ſending this commodious plague.
But, Oh, the Princeſs! her hard heart is ſhut,
By adamantine locks, againſt my love. *

Dioc.

† Mr. *Dryden*, in theſe three lines, ſeems to deſcribe the Regency of Queen *Mary*, while her huſband was abſent at the battle of the *Boyne*. It is known that neither his politics nor his religion favour'd King *William*.

In the *Spaniſh Fryar* there are ſome paſſages which every one interpreted as glancing at the government in thoſe times.

See Dalrymple's *Letters*.

* *Alc.* Your claim to her is ſtrong; you are betroth'd.
Pyr. True, in her nonage.
Alc. But that let's remov'd.

Dioc. I heard the prince of *Argos*, young *Adraſtus*,
When he was hoſtage here——

Cre. Oh, name him not! the bane of all my hopes;
That hot-brain'd, headlong warrior, has the charms
Of youth, and ſomewhat of a lucky raſhneſs,
To pleaſe a woman yet more fool than he.
That thoughtleſs ſex is caught by outward form
And empty noiſe, and loves itſelf in man.

Alc. But ſince the war broke out upon our frontiers,
He's now a foe to *Thebes*.

Cre. But is not ſo to her. See, ſhe appears;
Once more I'll prove my fortune: you inſinuate
Kind thoughts of me into the multitude;
Lay load upon the court; gull them with freedom;
And you ſhall ſee them toſs their tails, and gad,
As if the breeze had ſtung them.

Dioc. We'll about it. [*Exeunt* Alc. Dioc. *and* Pyr.

Enter Eurydice.

Cre. Hail, royal maid; thou bright *Eurydice!*
A laviſh planet reign'd when thou wert born;
And made thee of ſuch kindred-mold to heav'n,
Thou ſeem'ſt more heav'n's than ours.

Eur. Caſt round your eyes;
Where late the ſtreets were ſo thick ſown with men,
Like *Cadmus* brood, they juſtled for their paſſage:
Now look for thoſe erected heads, and ſee them
Like pebbles paving all our public ways:
When you have thought on this, then anſwer me,
If theſe be hours of courtſhip.

Cre. Yes, they are;
For when the gods deſtroy ſo faſt, 'tis time
We ſhould renew the race.

Eur. What, in the midſt of horror?

Cre. Why not then? —— There's the more need of comfort.

Eur. Impious *Creon!*

Cre. Unjuſt *Eurydice!* can you accuſe me Of love, which is Heav'n's precept, and not fear That vengeance which you ſay purſues our crimes, Should reach your perjuries?

Eur. Still th' old argument. I bade you caſt your eyes on other men, Now caſt them on yourſelf——, ——* ——think what you are. Hence from my ſight, thou poiſon to my eyes.

Cre. 'Twas you firſt poiſon'd mine; and yet methinks My face and perſon ſhould not make you ſport.

Eur. You force me, by your importunities, To ſhew you what you are.

Cre. A prince, who loves you: And ſince your pride provokes me, worth your love, Ev'n at its higheſt value.

Eur. Love from thee! Why love renounc'd thee ere thou ſaw'ſt the light: Nature herſelf amaz'd when thou wert born; † Cry'd

* Now caſt them on your ſelf: think what you are.
Cre. A man.
Eur. A man!
Cre. Why doubt you? I'm a man.
Eur. 'Tis well you tell me ſo, I ſhould miſtake you For any other part o'th'whole creation, Rather than think you man. Hence from my ſight, Thou poiſon to my eyes.

† *N. B.* This reſembles too much what is ſaid by *Shakeſpear* in *Richard the Third.*

* Cry'd out, the work's not mine——*

Cre. Am I to blame, if nature threw my body
In ſo perverſe a mould? Yet when ſhe caſt †
Her bungled work, ſhe ſtampt my mind more fair;
And as from chaos, buddled and deform'd,
The god ſtruck fire, and lighted up thoſe lamps
That beautify the ſky, ſo he inform'd
This ill-ſhap'd body with a daring ſoul;
And making leſs than man, he made me more.

Eur. No; thou art all one error; ſoul and body. ‡

Cre. Yon *Argian* prince, that enemy of *Thebes*,
Has made you falſe, and break your vows to me.

Eur. They were my mother's vows,
Made in my nonage.

* The midwife ſtood aghaſt; and when ſhe ſaw
Thy mountain back, and thy diſtorted legs,
Thy face itſelf,
Half-minted with the royal ſtamp of man,
And half o'ercome with beaſt, ſtood doubting long,
Whoſe right in thee were more;
And knew not, if to burn thee in the flames,
Were not the holier work.

† Her envious hand upon my ſupple joints,
Unable to reſiſt, and rumpled them
On heaps in their dark lodging, to revenge.

‡ The firſt young trial of ſome unſkill'd pow'r;
Rude in the making art, and ape of *Jove*.
Thy crooked mind within hunch'd out thy back;
And wander'd in thy limbs: to thy own kind
Make love, if thou can'ſt find it in the world;
And ſeek not from our ſex to raiſe an off-ſpring,
Which, mingled with the reſt, would tempt the gods
To cut off human kind.

Cre. No; let them leave
The *Argian* prince for you; that enemy
Of *Thebes* has made you falſe, and break the vows
You made to me.

Cre. But hear me, maid, ill-natur'd beauty, hear me, *
This blot of nature, this deform'd, loath'd *Creon*,
Is maſter of a ſword, to reach the blood
Of your young minion, ſpoil the gods' fine work,
And ſtab you in his heart.

Eur. This when thou doſt,
Then may'ſt thou ſtill be curs'd with loving me;
And, as thou art, be ſtill unpitied, loath'd;
And let his ghoſt—No, let his ghoſt have reſt:
But let the greateſt, fierceſt, foulеſt fury,
Let *Creon* haunt himſelf. [*Exit* Eur.

Cre. 'Tis true, I am
What ſhe has told me, an offence to ſight:
My body opens inward to my ſoul,
And lets in day to make my vices ſeen
By all diſcerning eyes, but the blind vulgar.
I muſt make haſte ere *OEdipus* return,
To ſnatch——the crown and her—for I ſtill love her. †

Enter Tireſias, *leaning on a ſtaff, and led by his daughter* Manto.

What makes this blind prophetic fool abroad!
Would his *Apollo* had him; he's too holy
For earth and me; I'll ſhun his walk, and ſeek
My popular friends. [*Exit* Creon.

Tir. A little farther; yet a little farther,
Thou wretched daughter of a dark old man,
Conduct

* *Cre.* But hear me, maid:

† To ſnatch the crown and her; for I ſtill love;
But love with malice; as an angry cur
Snarls while he feeds, ſo will I ſeize and ſtaunch
The hunger of my love on this proud beauty,
And leave the ſcraps for ſlaves.
B. N. This is low, and ſhould be omitted.

Conduct my weary steps: and thou, who seest
For me and for thyself, beware thou tread not
With impious steps upon dead corpse;—now stay;
Methinks I draw more open, vital air.
Where are we?

Man. Under covert of a wall,
The most frequented once, and noisy part
Of *Thebes*, now midnight silence reigns ev'n here;
And grass untrodden springs beneath our feet.

Tir. If there be nigh this place a sunny bank,
There let me rest awhile——————
————————a sunny bank!
Alas, how can it be, where no sun shines? *

A noise within, Follow, follow, follow! A Creon,
a Creon, a Creon!
Hark! a tumultuous noise, and *Creon*'s name
Thrice echo'd.

Man. Fly! the tempest drives this way.

Tir. Whither can age and blindness take their flight?
If I could fly, what could I suffer worse,
Secure of greater ills!

[*Noise again*, Creon, Creon, Creon!

Enter Creon, Diocles, Alcander, Pyracmon, *followed by the crowd.*

Cre. I thank ye, countrymen; but must refuse
The honours you intend me; they're too great,
And I am too unworthy; think again,
And make a better choice.

1st Cit. Think twice! I ne'er thought twice in all my life: that's double work.

2d Cit.

* But a dim winking taper in the skies,
That nods, and scarce holds up his drowsy head
To glimmer through the damps!
A blind man would scarcely dwell on these circumstances, which are therefore omitted.

2d. Cit. My firſt word is always my ſecond; and therefore I'll have no ſecond word; and therefore once again, I ſay, a *Creon.*

All. A *Creon*, a *Creon*, a *Creon!*

Cre. Yet hear me, fellow-citizens.

Dioc. Fellow-citizens! there was a word of kindneſs.

Alc. When did *OEdipus* ſalute you by that familiar name

1ſt Cit. Never, never; he was too proud.

Cre. Indeed he could not, for he was a ſtranger:
But under him our *Thebes* is half deſtroy'd.
Forbid it, Heav'n, the reſidue ſhould periſh
Under a *Theban* born.
'Tis true, the gods might ſend this plague among you,
Becauſe a ſtranger rul'd: but what of that,
Can I redreſs it now?

3d Cit. Yes, you or none.
'Tis certain that the gods are angry with us,
Becauſe he reigns.

Cre. OEdipus may return: you may be ruin'd.

1ſt Cit. Nay, if that be the matter, we are ruined already.

2d Cit. Half of us that are here preſent, were living men but yeſterday, and we that are abſent do but drop and drop, and no man knows whether he be dead or living. And therefore while we are ſound and well, let us ſatisfy our conſciences, and make a new king.

3d Cit. Ha! if we were but worthy to ſee another coronation, and then, if we muſt die, we'll go merrily together.

All. To the queſtion, to the queſtion.

Dioc. Are you content, *Creon* ſhould be your king?

All. A *Creon*, a *Creon*, a *Creon!*

Tir. Hear me, ye *Thebans*, and thou, *Creon*, hear me.

1ſt Cit. Who's that would be heard? We'll hear no man: we can ſcarce hear one another.

Tir.

Tir. I charge you, by the gods, to hear me.

2d Cit. Oh, 'tis *Apollo*'s prieſt, and we muſt hear him; 'tis the old blind prophet * that knows all things. †

Tir. When angry Heav'n ſcatters its plagues among you,
Is it for nought, ye *Thebans*? Are the gods
Unjuſt for puniſhing? Are there no crimes
Which pull this vengeance down?

1ſt Cit. Yes, yes, no doubt there are ſome ſins ſtirring that are the cauſe of all.

3d Cit. Yes, there are ſins, or we ſhould have no taxes.

2d Cit. For my part, I can ſpeak it with a ſafe conſcience, I ne'er ſinned in all my life.

1ſt Cit. Nor I.

3d Cit. Nor I.

2d Cit. Then we are all juſtified, the ſin lies not at our doors.

Tir. All juſtified alike, and yet all guilty;
Were every man's falſe dealings brought to light,
His envy, malice, lyings, perjuries,
His weights and meaſures, th' other man's extortions,
With what face could you tell offended Heav'n,
You had not ſinn'd?

2d Cit. Nay, if theſe be ſins, the caſe is altered; for my part I never thought any thing but murder had been a ſin.

Tir. And yet, as if all theſe were leſs than nothing,
You add rebellion to them, impious *Thebans*!
Have you not ſworn before the gods to ſerve
And

* "Blind prophet that ſees all things."

† *3d Cit.* He comes from the gods too, and they are our betters; and in good manners we muſt hear him. Speak, Prophet.

2d Cit. For coming from the gods that's no great matter, they can all ſay that; but he's a great ſcholar; he can make almanacks, an he were put to't, and therefore, I ſay, hear him.

And to obey this *OEdipus*, your King
By public voice elected? Answer me,
If this be true!

2d Cit. This is true; but it's a hard world, neighbours,
If a man's oath must be his master.

Cre. Speak, *Dircles*, all goes wrong.

Dioc. How are you traitors, countrymen of *Thebes*!
This holy fire, who presses you with oaths,
Forgets your first; were you not sworn before
To *Laius* and his blood!

All. We were; we were.

Dioc. While *Laius* has a lawful successor,
Your first oath still must bind: *Eurydice*
Is heir to *Laius*; let her marry *Creon*:
Offended Heav'n will never be appeas'd
While *OEdipus* pollutes the throne of *Laius*,
A stranger to his blood.

All. We'll no *OEdipus*, no *OEdipus*.

1st Cit. He puts the prophet in a mouse-hole.

2d Cit. I knew it would be so; the last man ever speaks the best reason.

Tir. Can benefits thus die, ungrateful *Thebans*!
Remember yet, when, after *Laius*' death,
The monster *Sphinx* laid your rich country waste,
Your vineyards spoil'd, your labouring oxen slew;
Yourselves for fear mew'd up within your walls,
She, taller than your gates, o'er-look'd your town;
But when she rais'd her bulk to sail above you,
She drove the air around her like a whirlwind,
And shaded all beneath; till stooping down,
She clapp'd her leathern wing again your tow'rs,
And thrust out her long neck, ev'n to your doors.

Dioc.

Dioc. Alc. Pyr. We'll hear no more.

Tir. You durſt not meet in temples
T' invoke the gods for aid, the proudeſt he
Who leads you now, then cower'd, like a dar'd lark:
This *Creon* ſhook for fear,
The blood of *Laius* curdled in his veins,
'Till *OEdipus* arriv'd.
Call'd by his own high courage and the gods,
Himſelf to you a god: ye offer'd him
Your queen and crown; (but what was then your crown?)
And Heav'n authoriz'd it by his ſucceſs.
Speak then, who is your lawful king?

All. 'Tis *OEdipus.*

Tir. 'Tis *OEdipus* indeed: Your king more lawful
Than yet you dream; for ſomething ſtill there lies
In Heav'n's dark volume, which I read thro' miſts:
'Tis great, prodigious; 'tis a dreadful birth,
Of wond'rous fate; and now, juſt now diſcloſing.
I ſee, I ſee, how terrible it dawns:
And my ſoul ſickens with it.

1ſt Cit. How the god ſhakes him!

Tir. He comes! he comes! victory! conqueſt! triumph!
But, Oh! ——————
Guiltleſs and guilty!——Murder! Parricide!
Inceſt! Diſcovery! Puniſhment——'tis ended,
And all your ſufferings o'er.

Shouts, enter Hæmon.

Hæm. Rouze up, you *Thebans*; tune your Io Pæans!
Your king returns; the *Argians* are o'ercome;
Their warlike prince in ſingle combat taken,
And led in bands by godlike *OEdipus.*

All. OEdipus, OEdipus, OEdipus!

Cre. Furies confound his fortune! [*Aſide.*

Haſte, all haſte, [*To them.*
And meet with bleſſings our victorious king;
Decree proceſſions bid new holy-days;
Crown all the ſtatues of our gods with garlands;
And raiſe a brazen column thus inſcrib'd:
To *OEdipus*, now twice a conqueror, deliv'rer of his *Thebes*.
Truſt me I weep for joy to ſee this day.

Tir. Yes, Heav'n knows how thou weep'ſt:—Go, countrymen,
And, as you uſe to ſupplicate your gods———
So meet your king with bays and olive branches:
Bow down, and touch his knees, and beg from him
An end of all your woes; for only he
Can give it you. [*Exit* Tireſias, *the people following.*

Enter OEdipus *in triumph*; Adraſtus *Priſoner*; Dymas, *train.*

Cre. All hail, great *OEdipus*;
Thou mighty conqueror, hail; welcome to *Thebes*;
To thy own *Thebes*; to all that's left of *Thebes*;
For half the citizens are ſwept away,
And wanting for thy triumphs:
And we, the happy remnant, only live
To welcome thee, and die.

OEdip. Thus pleaſure never comes ſincere to man;
But lent by Heav'n upon hard uſury;
And, while *Jove* holds us out the bowl of joy,
Ere it can reach our lips, 'tis daſh'd with gall
By ſome ſiniſter god. * Oh, mournful triumph!
Oh, conqueſt gain'd abroad, and loſt at home!
Oh, *Argos!* now rejoice, for *Thebes* lies low;
Thy ſlaughter'd ſons now ſmile, and think they won,
When they can count more *Theban* ghoſts than *Argians*.

Adr.

* *Left-handed god* in the original.

Adr. No; *Argos* mourns with *Thebes*; you temper'd ſo
Your courage while you fought, that mercy ſeem'd
The manlier virtue, and much more prevail'd.
While *Argos* is a people, think your *Thebes*
Can never want for ſubjects. Every nation
Will crowd to ſerve where *OEdipus* commands.

Cre. [*To* Hæm.] How mean it ſhews to fawn upon a victor!

Hæm. Had you beheld him fight, you had ſaid otherwiſe:
Come, 'tis brave bearing in him not to envy
Superior virtue.

OEdip. This indeed is conqueſt,
To gain a friend like you: Why were we foes?

Adr. 'Cauſe we were kings, and each diſdain'd an equal.
I fought to have it in my pow'r to do
What thou haſt done; and ſo to uſe my conqueſt;
To ſhew thee honour was my only motive.
Know this, that were my army at thy gates,
And *Thebes* thus waſte, I would not take the gift,
Which like a toy dropt from the hands of fortune,
Lay for the next chance-comer.

OEdip. [*Embracing.*] No more captive,
But brother of the war: 'tis much more pleaſant,
And ſafer, truſt me, thus to meet thy love,
Than when hard gantlets clench'd our warlike hands,
And kept them from ſoft uſe.

Adr. My conqueror!

OEdip. My friend———
That other name keeps enmity alive.
But longer to detain thee were a crime:
To love, and to *Eurydice*, go free:
Such welcome as a ruin'd town can give,
Expect from me; the reſt let her ſupply.

Adr. I go without a bluſh, though conquer'd twice,
By you, and by my princeſs. [*Exit* Adraſtus.

Cre. [*Aſide.*] Then I am conquer'd thrice; by *OEdipus*,
And her, and even by him, the ſlave of both:
Gods, I'm beholden to you. ‡

Enter the people with branches in their hands, holding them up, and kneeling: two prieſts before them.

OEdip. Alas, my people!
What means this ſpeechleſs ſorrow, down-caſt eyes,
And lifted hands? If there be one among you
Whom grief has left a tongue, ſpeak for the reſt.

1ſt Pr. Oh, father of thy country!
To thee theſe knees are bent, theſe eyes are lifted,
As to a viſible divinity.
A prince on whom Heav'n ſafely might repoſe
The buſineſs of mankind. *
But where's the glory of thy former acts?
Ev'n that's deſtroy'd, when none ſhall live to ſpeak it.
Millions of ſubjects ſhalt thou have; but mute.
A people of the dead; a crowded deſart;
A midnight ſilence at the noon of day.

OEdip. Oh, were our gods as ready with their pity,
As I with mine, this preſence ſhould be throng'd
With all I left alive; and my ſad eyes
Not ſearch in vain for friends, whoſe promis'd ſight
Flatter'd

‡ Gods, I'm beholden to you, for making me your image,
Would I could make you mine!

If we could ſuppoſe that the writings of *Moſes* had reached *Thebes* in thoſe days, this alluſion would be proper in *Creon*'s exclamation, and alſo very ſuitable to the profaneneſs and wickedneſs of his character.

* The buſineſs of mankind: for Providence
Might on thy 'careful' boſom ſleep ſecure,
And leave her taſk to thee.

Flatter'd my toils of war.

1ſt Pr. Twice our deliverer.

OEdip. Nor are now your vows
Addreſs'd to one who ſleeps.
When this unwelcome news firſt reach'd my ears,
Dymas was ſent to *Delphos*, to inquire
The cauſe and cure of this contagious ill,
And is this day return'd: But ſince his meſſage
Concerns the public, I refuſed to hear it
But in this general preſence: Let him ſpeak.

Dym. A dreadful anſwer from the hallow'd urn,
And ſacred Tripos did the prieſteſs give
In theſe myſterious words:
" Shed in a curſed hour, by curſed hand,
" Blood-royal unreveng'd has curs'd the land.
" When *Laius'* death is expiated well,
" Your plague ſhall ceaſe. The reſt let *Laius* tell."

OEdip. Dreadful indeed! Blood! and a king's blood too;
And ſuch a king's, and by his ſubjects ſhed!
(Elſe why this curſe on *Thebes?*) no wonder then
If monſters, wars, and plagues, revenge ſuch crimes!
If heaven be juſt, its whole artillery,
All muſt be empty'd on us: not one bolt
Shall err from *Thebes*; but more be call'd for, more:
New-moulded thunder of a larger ſize;
Driv'n by whole *Jove*. What, touch anointed pow'r!
Then, gods, beware; *Jove* would himſelf be next;
Could you but reach him too.

2d Pr. We mourn the ſad remembrance.

OEdip. Well you may:
Worſe than a plague infects you: y'are devoted
To mother earth, and to th' infernal pow'rs:

Hell

Hell has a right in you: I thank you, gods,
That I'm no *Theban* born. How my blood curdles!
As if this curſe touch'd me, and touch'd me nearer
Than all this preſence!——Yes, 'tis a king's blood;
And I, a king, am ty'd in deeper bonds
To expiate this blood——But where, with whom,
Or how muſt I atone it? Tell me, *Thebans*,
How *Laius* fell; for a confus'd report
Paſs'd through my ears, when firſt I took the crown:
But full of hurry, like a morning dream,
It vaniſh'd in the buſineſs of the day.

1ſt Pr. He went in private forth; but thinly follow'd;
And ne'er return'd to *Thebes*.

OEdip. Nor any from him? Came there no attendant?
Not one to bring the news?

2d Pr. But one, and he ſo wounded,
He ſcarce drew breath to ſpeak ſome few faint words.

OEdip. What were they? Something may be learn'd
from thence.

1ſt Pr. He ſaid a band of robbers watch'd their paſſage;
Who took advantage of a narrow way
To murder *Laius* and the reſt: himſelf
Left too for dead.

OEdip. Made you no more inquiry,
But took this bare relation?

2d Pr. 'Twas neglected:
For then the monſter *Sphinx* began to rage;
And preſent cares ſoon buried the remote;
So it was huſh'd, and never ſince reviv'd.

OEdip. Mark, *Thebans*, mark!
Juſt then the *Sphinx* began to rage among you;
The gods took hold ev'n of th'offending minute,

And

And dated thence your woes: thence will I trace them.

1ſt Pr. 'Tis juſt thou ſhould'ſt.

OEdip. Hear then this dreadful imprecation; hear it:
'Tis laid on all; not any one exempt:
Bear witneſs heav'n, avenge it on the perjur'd.
If any *Theban* born, if any ſtranger
Reveal this murder, or produce its author,
Ten *Attick* talents be his juſt reward:
But, if for fear, for favour, or for hire,
The murd'rer he conceal, the curſe of *Thebes*
Fall heavy on his head: unite our plagues,
Ye gods, and place them there: from fire and water,
Converſe, and all things common, be he baniſh'd.
But for the murderer's ſelf, unfound by man,
Find him, ye pow'rs, celeſtial and infernal;
And the ſame fate or worſe than *Laius* met,
Let be his lot: his children be accurſt;
His wife and kindred, all of his be curs'd.

Both Pr. Confirm it, Heaven!

Enter *Jocaſta*, attended by women.

Joc. At your devotions! Heav'n ſucceed your wiſhes;
And bring th' effect of theſe your pious prayers
On you, on me, and all.

Pr. Avert this omen, Heaven?

OEdip. Oh, fatal ſound, unfortunate *Jocaſta!*
What haſt thou ſaid? An ill hour haſt thou choſen
For theſe foreboding words! Why, we were curſing!

Joc. Then may that curſe fall only where you laid it.

OEdip. Speak no more!
For all thou ſay'ſt is ominous: we were curſing;
And that dire imprecation has thou faſtn'd
On *Thebes*, and thee and me, and all of us.

Joc.

Joc. Are then my bleſſings turn'd into a curſe?
Oh, unkind *OEdipus!* My former Lord
Thought me his bleſſing: be thou like my *Laius.*

OEdip. What yet again? The third time haſt thou curs'd me:
This imprecation was for *Laius'* death,
And thou haſt wiſh'd me like him.

Joc. Horror ſeizes me!

OEdip. Why doſt thou gaze upon me? Pr'ythee, love,
Take off thine eye; it burdens me too much.

Joc. The more I look, the more I find of *Laius:*
His ſpeech, his garb, his action; nay, his frown; †
For I have ſeen him frown——
————————but not on me.

OEdip. Are we ſo like?

Joc. In all things but his love.

OEdip. I love thee more, words cannot ſpeak how well.
No pious ſon e'er lov'd his mother more
Than I my dear *Jocaſta.*

Joc. I love you too
The ſelf-ſame way; and when you chid, methought
A mother's love roſe * up in your defence,
And bade me not be angry: be not you:
For I love *Laius* ſtill, as wives ſhould love;
But you more tenderly, as part of me;
And when I have you in my arms, methinks
I lull my child aſleep.

OEdip. Then we are bleſt,
And all theſe curſes ſweep along the ſkies
Like empty clouds. but drop not on our heads.

Joc. I have not joy'd an hour ſince you departed,

For

† (For I have ſeen it;) but ne'er bent on me.

* *Start up* in the original.

For public miſeries, and for private fears;
But this bleſt meeting has o'er-paid them all.
Good fortune, that comes ſeldom, comes more welcome.
All I can wiſh for now, is your conſent
To make my brother happy.

OEdip. How, *Jocaſta?*

Joc. By marriage with his niece, *Eurydice.*

OEdip. Uncle and niece; they are too near, my love:
'Tis too like inceſt: 'tis offence to kind:
Had I not promis'd, were there no *Adraſtus*,
No choice but *Creon* left her of mankind,
They ſhould not marry; ſpeak no more of it;
The thought diſturbs me.

Joc. Heav'n can never bleſs
A vow ſo broken, which I made to *Creon:*
Remember he's my brother.

OEdip. That's the bar. ‡

Joc. Be not diſpleas'd: I'll move the ſuit no more.

OEdip. No, do not; for, I know not why, it ſhakes me,
When I but think on inceſt; move we forward
To thank the gods for my ſucceſs, and pray
To waſh the guilt of royal blood away. [*Exeunt omnes.*

END of ACT the Firſt.

‡ And ſhe thy daughter: nature would abhor
To be forc'd back again upon herſelf,
And, like a whirlpool, ſwallow her own ſtreams.

ACT II.

SCENE, *an open gallery, or court in the palace.* *

The Time, Night. Thunder, &c. †

Enter Hæmon, Alcander, *and* Pyracmon.

Hæmon.

SURE 'tis the end of all things. ‡
Call you theſe peals of thunder but the yawn
Of bellowing clouds? By *Jove*, they ſeem to me
The world's laſt groan; and thoſe vaſt ſheets of flame
Are its laſt blaze; ‖
And Chaos is at hand.

Pyr. 'Tis midnight, yet there's not a *Theban* ſleeps,
But ſuch as ne'er muſt wake. All crowd about
The palace, and implore, as from a god,

Help

* SCENE, *an open Gallery. A Royal Bedchamber being ſuppoſed behind.*

† The appearances in the ſky may be ſuppoſed nothing more than Meteors, or the effects of what we call Northern Lights, and which, in thoſe times of ignorance and ſuperſtition, eſpecially in the ſeaſon of national calamity, might be interpreted ſupernatural tokens of divine diſpleaſure. I have ſaid this to preſerve probability in the repreſentation of this Scene.

‡ Sure 'tis the end of all things; Fate has torn
The lock of Time off, and his head is now
The ghaſtly Ball of round eternity!

This ſeems an alluſion to the vulgar repreſentation of Time; and it is, I think, unworthy of being introduced here: Beſides that, it gives too modern an air to the repreſentation of Time, and is at beſt a conceit.

‖ Are its laſt blaze? The tapers of the god,
The ſun and moon, run down like waxen-globes;
The ſhooting ſtars end all in purple jellies,

Help of the king; who, from the battlement,
By the red lightning's glare, deſcry'd afar,
Atones the angry powers. * [*Thunder, &c.*

Hæm. But ſee! the king, and queen, and all the court!
Did ever day or night ſhew ought like this?

[*Thunders again.*

Enter ŒDipus, Jocaſta, Euridice, Adraſtus, *and all coming forward with amazement.*

ŒDip. Anſwer, you pow'rs divine; ſpare all this noiſe,
This rack of heaven, and ſpeak your fatal pleaſure.
Why breaks yon dark and duſky orb away?
Why from the bleeding womb of monſtrous night,
Burſt forth ſuch myriads of abortive ſtars?
Ha! my *Jocaſta*, look! the ſilver moon!
A ſudden crimſon ſtains her beauteous face!
She's all o'er blood! and look, behold again,
What mean the myſtic heav'ns ſhe journeys on? †

* *Hæm.* Ha! *Pyracmon*, look;
Behold *Alcander*, from yon' weſt of heav'n,
The perfect figures of a man and woman:
A ſceptre bright with gems in each right hand,
Their flowing robes of dazzling purple made,
Diſtinctly yonder in that point they ſtand,
Juſt weſt; a bloody red ſtains all the place;
And ſee, their faces are quite hid in clouds.
Pyr. Cluſters of golden ſtars hang o'er their heads,
And ſeem ſo crowded, that they burſt upon them:
All dart at once their baleful influence
In leaking fire.
Alc. Long-bearded comets ſtick,
Like flaming porcupines, to their left ſides,
As they would ſhoot their quills into their hearts.

† A vaſt *Eclipſe* darkens the labouring planet:
The word *Eclipſe* is too modern an expreſſion.

Sound there, ſound all our inſtruments of war, ‡
Of various metal, ſilver, braſs, and iron,
To aid the lab'ring moon.

[*A noiſe is heard of warlike inſtruments, &c.*

Adr. Let's gaze no more.
'Tis vain; you ſee the prodigies continue.

ŒEdip. Forbear, raſh man——Once more, ye pow'rs on high!
If that the glow-worm light of human reaſon
Might dare to offer at immortal knowledge,
And cope with gods, why all this ſtorm of nature?
Why do the rocks ſplit, and why rolls the ſea?
Why theſe portents in heav'n, and plagues on earth?
Why yon gigantic forms, ethereal monſters?
Alas! is all this but to fright the dwarfs
Which your own hands have made? Then be it ſo.
Or if the fates reſolve ſome expiation
For murder'd *Laius:* Hear me, hear me, gods!
Hear me thus proſtrate: Spare this groaning land,
Save innocent *Thebes*, ſtop the tyrant Death;
Do this, and lo I ſtand up an oblation
To meet your ſwifteſt and ſevereſt anger,
Shoot all at once, and ſtrike me to the centre. *

[*Thunder and the prodigies vaniſh.*

Joc.

‡ Clarions and trumpets; ſilver, braſs, and iron,
And beat a thouſand drums to help her labour.

Clarions and trumpets were invented (eſpecially the former) long ſince *ŒEdipus*'s time. We may certainly add drums too, as of much later invention. Trumpets were unknown at the time of the *Trojan* war, although alluded to by *Homer*. *See* Iliad *the* 20*th*.

* [*The Cloud draws that veil'd the Heads of the Figures of the ſky, and ſhews them crowned with the Names of* ŒEdipus *and* Jocaſta, *written above in great Characters of Gold.*

Adr. Either I dream, and all my cooler ſenſes
Are vaniſh'd with that cloud that fleets away,

Or

Joc. My Lord, my *OEdipus*, why gaze you now,
When the whole heaven is clear, as if the gods
Had ſome new monſters made? Will you not turn
And bleſs your people, who devour each word
You breathe?

OEdip. It ſhall be ſo.——Yes; I will die,
Will die, O *Thebes*, my country, yes——to ſave thee!
Draw from my heart my blood with more content
Than e'er I wore thy crown. Yet, Oh, *Jocaſta!* †
On thy fair hand, upon thy breaſt I ſwear,
I cannot call to mind, from budding childhood
To blooming youth, a crime by me committed,
For which the awful gods ſhould doom my death.

Joc. 'Tis not you, my Lord,
But he who murder'd *Laius*, frees the land:
Were you, which is impoſſible, the man,
Perhaps my poignard firſt ſhould drink your blood;
But you are innocent, as your *Jocaſta*,
From crimes like thoſe. This made me violent
To ſave your life, which you unjuſt would loſe:
Nor can you comprehend, with deepeſt thought,
The horrid agony you caſt me in,
When you reſolv'd to die.

OEdip. Is't poſſible?

Joc. Alas, why ſtart you ſo? Her ſtiff'ning grief,

Who

Or juſt above thoſe two majeſtic heads,
I ſee, I read diſtinctly in large gold,
OEdipus and *Jocaſta*.
Alc. I read the ſame.
Adr. 'Tis wonderful; yet ought not man to wade
Too far in the vaſt deep of deſtiny.

† By all th' indearments of miraculous love,
By all our languiſhings, our fears in pleaſure,
Which oft have made us wonder; here I ſwear

Who ſaw her children ſlaughter'd all at once,
Was dull to mine: Methinks I ſhould have made
My boſom bare againſt the armed god,
To ſave my *OEdipus!*

OEdip. I pray, no more.

Joc. You've ſilenc'd me, my Lord.

OEdip. Pardon me, dear *Jocaſta!*
Pardon a heart that ſinks with ſufferings,
And can but vent itſelf in ſobs and murmurs:
Yet, to reſtore my peace, I'll find him out.
Yes, yes, you gods! you ſhall have ample vengeance
On *Laius'* murderer. O, the traitor's name!
I'll know't, I will; art ſhall be conjur'd for it,
And nature all unravell'd.

Joc. Sacred Sir——

OEdip. Rage will have way, and 'tis but juſt; I'll fetch him,
Tho' lodg'd in air, upon a dragon's wing,
Tho' rocks ſhould hide him: Nay, he ſhall be dragg'd
From hell, if charms can hurry him along:
His ghoſt ſhall be, by ſage *Tireſias'* power,
(*Tireſias*, that rules all beneath the moon)
Confin'd to fleſh, to ſuffer death once more;
And then be plung'd in his firſt fires again.

Enter Creon.

Cre. My Lord, *Tireſias* attends your pleaſure.

OEdip. Haſte, and bring him in.
O, my *Jocaſta*, *Eurydice*, *Adraſtus*,
Creon, and all ye *Thebans*, now the end
Of plagues, of madneſs, murders, prodigies,
Draws on: This battle of the heav'ns and earth
Shall by his wiſdom be reduc'd to peace.

Enter

Enter Tireſias, *leaning on a ſtaff, led by his daughter* Manto, *followed by other* Thebans. ‡

O prophet, anſwer me, declare aloud
The traitor who conſpir'd the death of *Laius*:
Or be they more, who from malignant ſtars,
Have drawn this plague that blaſts unhapyy *Thebes!*

Tir. We muſt no more than Fate commiſſions us——
Yet ſomething, and of moment, I'll unfold,
If that the god would wake; I feel him now,
Like a ſtrong ſpirit charm'd into a tree,
That leaps and moves the wood without a wind:
The rouzed god, as all this while he lay,
Intomb'd alive, ſtarts and dilates himſelf;
He ſtruggles, and he tears my aged trunk
With holy fury; my old arteries burſt;
My rivel'd ſkin,
Like parchment, crackles at the hallow'd fire;
I ſhall be young again: *Manto*, my daughter,
Thou haſt a voice that might have ſav'd the bard
Of *Thrace*, and forc'd the raging *Bacchanals*,
With lifted prongs, to liſten to thy airs.
O charm this god, this fury in my boſom,
Lull him with tuneful notes, and artful ſtrings,
With pow'rful ſtrains; *Manto*, my lovely child,
Sooth the unruly godhead to be mild.

SONG *to* APOLLO.

Phœbus, god belov'd by men,
At thy dawn, every beaſt is rouz'd in his den;
At thy ſetting, all the birds of thy abſence complain,
And we die, all die, till the morning comes again.

Phœbus

‡ O thou, whoſe moſt aſpiring mind
Knows all the buſineſs of the courts above,
Opens the cloſets of the gods, and dares
To mix with *Jove* himſelf and Fate at council;

Phœbus, god belov'd by men!
Idol of the Eaſtern kings,
Awful as the god who flings
His thunder round, and the lightning wings;
God of ſongs, and *Orphean* ſtrings,
Who to this mortal boſom brings
All harmonious heav'nly things!
The drowzy prophet to revive,
Ten thouſand thouſand forms before him drive;
With chariots and horſes all o'fire awake him,
Convulſions, and furies, and propheſies ſhake him:
Let him tell it in groans, tho' he bend with the load,
Tho' he burſt with the weight of the terrible god.

Tir. The wretch, who ſhed the blood of old *Labdacides*,
Lives, and is great;
But cruel greatneſs ne'er was long:
The firſt of *Laius'* blood his life did ſeize,
And urg'd his fate,
Which elſe had laſting been and ſtrong,
The wretch, who *Laius* kill'd muſt bleed or fly;
Or *Thebes*, conſum'd with plagues, in ruins lie.

OEdip. The firſt of *Laius'* blood! pronounce the perſon;
May the god roar from thy prophetic mouth,
That even the dead may ſtart up, to behold.
Name him, I ſay, that moſt accurſed wretch,
For, by the ſtars, he dies!
Speak, I command thee;
By *Phœbus*, ſpeak; for ſudden death's his doom;
Here ſhall he fall, bleed on this very ſpot;
His name, I charge thee once more, ſpeak.

Tir. 'Tis loſt,
Like what we think can never ſhun remembrance;

Yet

Yet of a ſudden's gone beyond the clouds.

OEdip. Fetch it from thence; I'll have't where e'er it be.

Cre. Let me intreat you, ſacred Sir, be calm,
And *Creon* ſhall point out the great offender.
'Tis true, reſpect of nature might enjoin
Me ſilence at another time; but, oh,
Much more the pow'r of my eternal love!
That, that ſhould ſtrike me dumb: yet, *Thebes* my country,
I'll break through all to ſuccour thee, poor city.
O, I muſt ſpeak.

OEdip. Speak then, if ought thou know'ſt:
As much thou ſeem'ſt to know, delay no longer.

Cre. O beauty! O illuſtrious royal maid!
To whom my vows were ever paid till now,
And with ſuch modeſt, chaſte and pure affection,
The coldeſt nymph might read 'em without bluſhing.
Art thou the murd'reſs, then, of wretched *Laius?*
And I, muſt I accuſe thee? Oh, my tears!
Why will you fall in ſo abhorr'd a cauſe?
But that thy beauteous, barbarous hand deſtroy'd *
Thy Father——(monſtrous act!)——both gods, and men
At once take notice.

OEdip. Eurydice!——I ſtand amaz'd——*Eurydice!*

Eur. Traitor, go on; I ſcorn thy little malice,
And knowing well my perfect innocence, †
I fear not thee, nor all thy wicked arts,

* Thy father (O monſtrous act!) both gods
And men at once take notice.
OEdip. Eurydice!

† And knowing more my perfect innocenceo
Than gods and men, then how much more than thee,
Who art their oppoſite, and form'd a liar,
I thus diſdain thee! thou once didſt talk of love;
Becauſe I hate thy love,
Thou doſt accuſe me.

Nor yet the prieſt——but know thee for a liar,
(Whom gods and men muſt hate)——I hate thee wretch,
And thus diſdain thee——thou didſt talk of love:
Becauſe I hate thy love, thou doſt accuſe me.

Adr. Villain, inglorious villain,
And traitor, doubly damn'd, who durſt blaſpheme
The ſpotleſs virtue of the brighteſt beauty;
Thou dy'ſt: nor ſhall the ſacred majeſty
[*Draws and wounds him.*
That guards this place, preſerve thee from my rage.

OEdip. Diſarm them both. Prince, I ſhall make you know
That I can tame you twice. Guards, ſeize him.

Adr. Sir,
I muſt acknowledge in another cauſe
Repentance might abaſh me; but I glory
In this, and ſmile to ſee the traitor's blood.

OEdip. Creon, you ſhall be ſatisfy'd at full.

Cre. My hurt is nothing, Sir; but I appeal
To wiſe *Tireſias*, if my accuſation
Be not moſt true. The firſt of *Laius'* blood
Gave him his death. Is there a prince before her? ‡
But may this blood ne'er ceaſe to drop, O *Thebes*,
If pity of thy ſufferings did not move me
To ſhew the cure which Heav'n itſelf preſcrib'd.

Eur. Yes, *Thebans*, I will die to ſave your lives,
More willingly than you can wiſh my fate;
But let this good, this wiſe, this holy man,
Pronounce my ſentence: for to fall by him,
By the vile breath of that prodigious villain, *
Would ſink my ſoul, although I ſav'd my country,
And though my death could expiate for all.

Adr.

‡ Then ſhe is faultleſs, and I aſk her pardon.

* Would ſink my ſoul, tho' I ſhould die a *martyr*. *Martyr* is too modern a word.

Adr. Unhand me, ſlaves. O mightieſt of kings,
See at your feet a prince not us'd to kneel;
Touch not *Eurydice*, by all the gods,
As you would ſave your *Thebes*, but take my life:
For ſhould ſhe periſh, Heav'n would heap plagues on plagues,
Rain ſulphur down, hurl kindled bolts
Upon your guilty heads.

Cre. You turn to gallantry, what is but juſtice:
Proof will be eaſy made. *Adraſtus* was
The robber who bereft th' unhappy king
Of life; becauſe he ſtrongly had deny'd *
To make ſo poor a prince his ſon-in-law:
Therefore 'twere fit that both of them ſhould periſh.

All Theb. Both, let both die——both die. ‡

OEdip. Hence you wild herd! For your ring-leader here,
He ſhall be made example. *Hæmon*, take him.

1 *Theb.* Mercy! O Mercy!

OEdip. Mutiny in my preſence!
Hence, let me ſee that buſy face no more.

Tir. Thebans, what madneſs makes you drunk with rage?
Enough of guilty death's already acted;
Fierce *Creon* has accuſed *Eurydice*,
With prince *Adraſtus*; which the god reproves
By inward checks, and leaves their fates in doubt.

OEdip. Therefore inſtruct us what remains to do,
Or ſuffer; for I feel a ſleep like death
Upon me, and I ſigh to be at reſt.

Tir. Since that the pow'rs divine refuſe to clear
The myſtic deed, I'll to the Grove of Furies;

* Of life; becauſe he *flatly* had deny'd
Flatly is a word too much in common Uſe.

‡ 1 *Theb.* Both, let both die.
All Theb. Both, both; let them die.

There I can force the infernal gods to ſhew
Their horrid forms; each trembling ghoſt ſhall riſe,
And leave their griſly king alone in Hell. *
For prince *Adraſtus* and *Eurydice*,
My life's engag'd, I'll guard them in the fane,
Till the dark myſteries of hell are done.
Follow me, princes. *Thebans*, all to reſt.
O, *OEdipus*, to-morrow—but no more.
If that thy wakeful genius will permit,
Indulge thy brain this night with ſofter ſlumbers:
To-morrow, O to-morrow!——ſleep, my ſon;
And in prophetic dreams thy fate be ſhewn.

[*Exeunt* Tir. Adr. Eur. Man. *and Thebans.*

OEdip. To bed, my fair, my dear, my beſt *Jocaſta.*
After the toils of war, 'tis wond'rous ſtrange
Our loves ſhould thus be daſh'd. One moment's thought,
And I'll approach the arms of my belov'd.

Joc. Conſume whole years in care, ſo now and then
I may have leave to feed my famiſh'd eyes
With one ſhort paſſing glance, and ſigh my vows:
This and no more, my Lord, is all the paſſion
Of languiſhing *Jocaſta.* [*Exit.*

OEdip. Thou ſofteſt, ſweeteſt of the world! good night.
Nay, ſhe is beauteous too; yet, mighty love!
I never offer'd to obey thy laws,
But an unuſual chilneſs came upon me;
An unknown hand ſtill check'd my forward joy,
Daſh'd me with bluſhes, tho' no light was near;
That ev'n the act became a violation.

Pyr. He's ſtrangely thoughtful.

OEdip. Hark! who was that? Ha! *Creon*, did'ſt thou call me?

Cre. Not I, my gracious Lord, nor any here.

OEdip.

* And leave their grizly king without a waiter.

OEdip. That's ſtrange! methought I heard a doleful voice
Cry *OEdipus*—The prophet bad me ſleep.
He talk'd of dreams, of viſions, and to-morrow.
I'll muſe no more;——then come what will, or can!
My thoughts are clearer than unclouded ſtars;
And with thoſe thoughts I'll reſt. *Creon*, good night.
[*Exit with* Hæm.

Cre. Sleep ſeal your eyes up, Sir, eternal ſleep.
But if he ſleep and wake again, O all
Tormenting dreams, wild horrors of the Night,
And hags of fancy, wing him through the air:
From precipices hurl him headlong down;
Charybdis' roar, and death be ſet before him.

Alc. Your curſes have already ta'en effect;
For he looks very ſad.

Cre. May he be rooted where he ſtands for ever! †

Pyr. No more; you tear yourſelf, but vex not him.
Methinks 'twere brave this night to force the temple,
While blind *Tireſias* conjures up the fiends,
And paſs the time with nice *Eurydice*.

Alc. Try promiſes and threats, and if all fail,
Since hell's broke looſe, why ſhould not you be mad?
Raviſh, and leave her dead with her *Adraſtus*.

Cre. Were the globe mine, I'd give a province hourly
For ſuch another thought. Luſt, and revenge!
To ſtab at once the man whom I moſt hate, ‡
And to enjoy the woman whom I love,

† His eye-balls never move, brows be unbent,
His blood, his entrails, liver, heart and bowels,
Be blacker than the place I wiſh him, hell.

‡ To ſtab at once the only man I hate,

I aſk no more of my auſpicious ſtars. *

Enter Hæmon.

Hæm. My Lord, the troubled king is gone to reſt;
Yet, ere he ſlept, commanded me to clear
The Antichambers: none muſt dare be near him.

Cre. Hæmon, you do your duty—— [*Thunder.*
And we obey.—The night grows yet more dreadful!
'Tis juſt that all retire to their devotions;
The gods are angry: but to-morrow's dawn,
If prophets do not lie, will make all clear.

As they go off, ŒDipus *enters, walking aſleep in his night-gown, with a dagger in his right-hand, and a taper in his left*

ŒDip. O, my *Jocaſta!* 'tis for this the wet
Starv'd ſoldier lies on the cold ground;
For this he bears the ſtorms
Of winter camps, and freezes in his arms:
To be thus circled, to be thus embrac'd;
That I could hold thee ever!—Ha? where art thou?
What means this melancholy light, that ſeems
The gloom of glowing embers?
The curtain's drawn; and ſee ſhe's here again!
Jocaſta! Ha! what, fall'n aſleep ſo ſoon?
How fares my love? This taper will inform me.
Ha! lightning blaſt me, thunder
Rivet me ever to *Prometheus'* rock,
And vultures knaw out my inceſtuous heart!
By all the gods, my mother *Merope!*
My ſword, a dagger! Ha, who wait's there? Slaves,
My ſword. What, *Hæmon*, dar'ſt thou, villain, ſtop me?
With thy own poignard periſh. Ha! who's this?

Or

* The reſt as Fortune pleaſe; ſo but this night
She play me fair, why, let her turn for ever.

Or is't a change of death? By all my honours,
New murder; thou haſt ſlain old *Polybus*:
Inceſt and parricide, thy father's murdered!
Out, thou infernal flame: now all is dark,
All blind and diſmal, moſt triumphant miſchief!
And now, while thus I ſtalk about the room,
I challenge fate to find another wretch
Like *OEdipus*! [*Thunder, &c.*

Enter Jocaſta *attended, with lights, in a night-gown.*

Night, horror, death, confuſion, hell, and furies!
Where am I? O, *Jocaſta*, let me hold thee;
Thus to my boſom, ages let me graſp thee,
All that the hardeſt temper'd weather'd fleſh,
With fierceſt human ſpirit inſpir'd, can dare,
Or do, I dare; but, O you pow'rs, this was
By infinite degrees too much for man.
Methinks my deafen'd ears
Are burſt; my eyes, as if they had been knock'd
By ſome tempeſtuous hand, ſhoot flaſhing fire:
That ſleep ſhould do this!

Joc. Then my fears were true.
Methought I heard your voice, and yet I doubted,
Now roaring like the ocean, when the winds
Fight with the waves; now, in a ſtill ſmall tone
Your dying accents fell, as racking ſhips,
After the dreadful yell, ſink murm'ring down,
And bubble up a noiſe.

OEdip. Truſt me, thou faireſt, beſt of all thy kind,
None e'er in dreams was tortur'd ſo before.
Yet what moſt ſhocks the niceneſs of my temper,
Ev'n far beyond the killing of my father,
And my own death, is that this horrid ſleep

Daſh'd

Dash'd my ſick fancy with an act of inceſt:
I dream'd, *Jocaſta*, that thou wert my mother;
Which, tho' impoſſible, ſo damps my ſpirits,
That I could do a miſchief on my ſelf,
Leſt I ſhould ſleep and dream the like again.

Joc. O, *OEdipus*, too well I underſtand you!
I know the wrath of heav'n, the care of *Thebes*,
The cries of its inhabitants, war's toils,
And thouſand other labours of the ſtate,
Are all referr'd to you, and ought to take you
For ever from *Jocaſta*.

OEdip. Life of my life, and treaſure of my ſoul,
Heav'n knows I love thee.

Joc. O, you think me vile,
And of an inclination ſo ignoble,
That I muſt hide me from your eyes for ever.
Be witneſs, gods, and ſtrike *Jocaſta* dead,
If an immodeſt thought, or low deſire
Inflam'd my breaſt, ſince firſt our loves were lighted.

OEdip. O riſe, and add not, by thy cruel kindneſs,
A grief more ſenſible than all my torments.
Thou think'ſt my dreams are forg'd; but by thyſelf,
The greateſt oath I ſwear, they are moſt true:
But, be they what they will, I here diſmiſs them;
Begone, Chimæras, to your mother clouds.
Is there a fault in us? Have we not ſearch'd
The will of fate, examin'd all the entrails †
Of birds and beaſts, and tir'd the prophet's art?
Yet what avails? *
Therefore, like wretches that have linger'd long,

We'll

† The womb of Heav'n, examin'd all the entrails

* Yet what avails? He, and the gods together,
Seem, like phyſicians, at a loſs to help us:

We'll ſnatch the ſtrongeſt cordial of our love.——
To bed, my fair.——But hark!——who calls on *OEdipus*?*
Diſt thou not hear a voice ‡
For methought I did.

Joc. O, my love, my lord, ſupport me! †

OEdip. Reſt on my hand. Thus, arm'd with innocence,
I'll face theſe babbling dæmons of the air:
In ſpight of ghoſts, I'll on,
Tho' round my bed the furies plant their charms,
I'll break them with *Jocaſta* in my arms. ‖

[*Exeunt.*

END of ACT the Second.

ACT III.

SCENE, *a dark Grove.*

Enter Creon *and* Diocles.

CREON.

'TIS better not to be, than be unhappy.

Dioc. What mean you by theſe words?

Cre. 'Tis better not to be, than to be *Creon.*
A thinking ſoul is puniſhment enough;
But when 'tis great, like mine, and wretched too,
Then every thought draws blood.

* *Ghoſt within.* OEdipus!
OEdip. Ha! who calls?
‡ *Joc.* Alas! I did.
Ghoſt. Jocaſta!

† *OEdip.* Call louder, till you burſt your airy forms.

‖ Claſp'd in the folds of love, I'll wait my doom,
And act my joys, tho' thunder ſhake the room.

Dioc. You are not wretched.

Cre. I am: my ſoul's ill married to my body;
I would be young, be handſome, be belov'd:
Could I but breathe myſelf into *Adraſtus*——

Dioc. You rave; call home your thoughts.

Cre. I pr'ythee let my ſoul take air a while;
Were ſhe in *OEdipus*, I were a king;
Then I had kill'd a monſter, gain'd a battle,
And had my rival priſoner; brave, brave actions:
Why have not I done theſe?

Dioc. Your fortune hindered. †

Cre. I have a ſoul for ev'ry thing that's great:
But Fortune will have nothing done that's great
But by young handſome fools: body and brawn
Do all her work: *Hercules* was a fool,
And ſtraight grew famous: a mad boiſterous fool:
Nay worſe, a woman's fool.
Fool is the ſtuff of which Heav'n makes a hero.

Dioc. A ſerpent ne'er becomes a flying dragon,
Till he has eat a ſerpent.

Cre. Goes it there?
I underſtand thee; I muſt kill *Adraſtus*.

Dioc. Or not enjoy your miſtreſs:
Eurydice and he are pris'ners here,
But will not long be ſo: This tell-tale ghoſt
Perhaps will clear them both.

Cre. Well; 'tis reſolv'd.

Dioc. The princeſs walks this way;
You muſt not meet her
Till this be done.

Cre. I muſt.

And

† *Cre.* There's it. I have a ſoul to do them all:
There's it—is too vulgar a phraſe.

Dioc. She hates your ſight;
And more ſince you accus'd her.
Cre. Urge it not.
I cannot ſtay to tell thee my deſign,
For ſhe's too near.

Enter Eurydice.

How, madam, were your thoughts employ'd?
Eur. On death and thee.
Cre. Then they were not well ſorted: life with me
Had been the better match.
Eur. No, I was thinking
On the two moſt deteſted things in nature:
And they are death and thee.
Cre. The thought of death to one near death is dreadful!
O 'tis a fearful thing to be no more!
Or, if to be, to wander after death;
To walk as ſpirits do, in brakes all day;
And when the darkneſs comes, to glide in paths
That lead to graves; and in the ſilent vault,
Where lies your own pale ſhrowd, to hover o'er it,
Striving to enter your forbidden corpſe;
And often, often, vainly breathe your ghoſt
Into your lifeleſs lips:
Then, like a lone benighted traveller
Shut out from lodging, ſhall your groans be anſwer'd
By whiſtling winds, whoſe every blaſt will ſhake
Your tender form to atoms.
Eur. Muſt I be this thin being, and thus wander?
No quiet after death?
Cre. None: you muſt leave
This beauteous body; all this youth and freſhneſs
Muſt be no more the object of deſire,
But a cold lump of clay;

Which then your discontented ghost will leave,
And loath its former lodging.
This is the best of what comes after death,
Ev'n to the best.

Eur. What then shall be thy lot!
Eternal torments, baths of boiling sulphur;
Vicissitudes of fires, and then of frosts;
And an old guardian fiend, ugly as thou art,
To hollow in thy ears at every lash;
This for *Eurydice*; these for her *Adrastus!*

Cre. For her *Adrastus!*

Eur. Yes, for her *Adrastus*;
For death shall ne'er divide us. Death! what's death?

Dioc. You seem'd to fear it.

Eur. But I more fear *Creon*. ‡

Dioc. Nay, now you are too sharp.

Eur. Can I be so to one who has accus'd me
Of murder and of parricide?

Cre. You provok'd me:
And yet I only did thus far accuse you,
As next of blood to *Laius*: be advis'd,
And

‡ To take that hunch-back'd monster in my arms,
Th' excrescence of a man.

Dioc. [To *Cre.*] See what you've gain'd.

Eur. Death only can be dreadful to the bad:
To innocence, 'tis like a bug-bear dress'd
To frighten children; pull of his mask,
And he'll appear a friend.

Cre. You talk too slightly
Of death and hell.
Let me inform you better.

Eur. You best can tell the news from your own country.

These sentiments, tho' fine, are improper here; the notions of a future state were too imperfect in those times to justify these distinctions, which are but faintly mark'd out by *Homer* in his account of the dead.

And you may live.

Eur. The means?

Cre. 'Tis offer'd you;
The fool *Adraſtus* has accus'd himſelf.

Eur. He has indeed, to take the guilt from me.

Cre. He ſays he loves you; if he does, 'tis well:
He ne'er could prove it in a better time.

Eur. Then death muſt be his recompence for love!

Cre. 'Tis a fool's juſt reward:
The wiſe can make a better uſe of life:
But 'tis the young man's pleaſure; his ambition:
I grudge him not that favour.

Eur. When he's dead,
Where ſhall I find his equal?

Cre. Every where,
Fine empty things, like him,
The court ſwarms with them.
Fine fighting things; in camps they are ſo common,
Crows feed on nothing elſe; plenty of fools;
A glut of them in *Thebes*.
And fortune ſtill takes care they ſhould be ſeen:
She places them aloft, o'th' topmoſt ſpoke
Of all her wheel: fools are the daily work
Of nature; her vocation; if ſhe form
A man, ſhe loſes by't, 'tis too expenſive;
'Twould make ten fools; a man's a prodigy.

Eur. That is, a *Creon*: O thou black detractor, *
Thou who lov'ſt nothing but what nothing loves,
And that's thyſelf: who has conſpir'd againſt
My life and fame, to make me loath'd by all,

And

* Who ſpitt'ſt thy venom againſt gods and men!
Thou enemy of eyes:
This, and other paſſages in a former ſcene, are too like ſcolding in verſe, and are therefore omitted, as unbecoming language for a princeſs.

And only fit for thee.
But for *Adraſtus'* death, good gods, his death!
What curſe ſhall I invent?
Dioc. No more—he's here.
Eur. He ſhall be ever here.
He who would give his life, give up his fame——
Enter Adraſtus.
If all the exceſſence of woman-kind
Were mine——No, 'tis too little all for him:
Were I made up of endleſs, endleſs joys——
Adr. And ſo thou art:
The man who loves like me,
Would think ev'n infamy, the worſt of ills,
Were cheaply purchas'd, were thy love the price.
Uncrown'd, a captive, nothing left but honour,
'Tis the laſt thing a prince ſhould throw away:
But when the ſtorm grows loud, and threatens love,
Throw ev'n that over-board; for love's the jewel,
And laſt it muſt be kept.
Cre. [*To* Dioc.] Work him, be ſure,
To rage—He's paſſionate;
Make him th' aggreſſor.
Dioc. Oh, falſe love! falſe honour!
Cre. Diſſembled both, and falſe!
Adr. Dar'ſt thou ſay this to me?
Cre. To you! why, what are you, that I ſhould fear you?
I am not *Laius*. Hear me, Prince of *Argos*.
You give what's nothing, when you give your honour;
'Tis gone, 'tis loſt in battle. For your love,
Vows made in wine are not ſo falſe as that:
You kill'd her father; you confeſs'd you did:
A mighty argument to prove your paſſion!
Adr. [*Aſide.*] Gods, muſt I bear this brand, and not retort

The

The lie to his foul throat.

Dioc. Baſely you kill'd him.

Adr. [*Aſide.*] Oh, I burn inward! all my blood's on fire!
Alcides, when the poiſon'd ſhirt ſate cloſeſt,
Had but an ague-fit to this my fever.
Yet, for *Eurydice*, ev'n this I'll ſuffer,
To free my love——Well, then, I kill'd him baſely.

Cre. Fairly, I'm ſure, you could not.

Dioc. Nor alone.

Cre. You had your fellow thieves about you, Prince;
They conquer'd, and you kill'd.

Adr. [*Aſide.*] Down, ſwelling heart!
'Tis for thy princeſs, all—Oh, my *Eurydice*!—[*To her.*

Eur. [*To him.*] Reproach not thus the weakneſs of my ſex,
As if I could not bear a ſhameful death,
Rather than ſee you burden'd with a crime
Of which I know you free.

Cre. You do ill, Madam,
To let your headlong love triumph o'er nature.
Dare you defend your father's murderer?

Eur. You know he kill'd him not.

Cre. Let him ſay ſo.

Dioc. See, he ſtands mute.

Cre. O pow'r of conſcience, ev'n in wicked men!
It works, it ſtings, it will not let him utter
One Sylable, one No, to clear himſelf
From the moſt baſe, deteſted, horrid act,
That ere could ſtain a villain, not a prince.

Adr. Ha! Villain!

Cre. Echo to him, groves, cry villain.

Adr. Let me conſider—Did I murder *Laius*,
Thus like a villain?

Cre. Beſt revoke your words,

And

And ſay, you kill'd him not.

Adr. Not like a villain; pr'ythee, change me that
For any other lie.

Dioc. No, villain, villain.

Cre. You kill'd him not—Proclaim your innocence,
Accuſe the princeſs: ſo I knew 'twould be.

Adr. I thank thee; thou inſtruct'ſt me.
No matter how I kill'd him.

Cre. [*Aſide.*] Cool'd again!

Eur. Thou who uſurp'ſt the ſacred name of conſcience,
Did not thy ſelf declare him innocent?
To me declare him ſo? The King ſhall know it.

Cre. You will not be believ'd; for I'll forſwear it. †

Adr. Infamous wretch!

Cre. My conſcience ſhall not do me the ill office
To ſave a rival's life; when thou art dead,
(As dead thou ſhalt be, or be yet more baſe
Than thou think'ſt me,
By forfeiting her life, to ſave thy own.)
Know this, and let it grate thy very ſoul,
She ſhall be mine: (ſhe is, if vows were binding)
Mark me, the fruit of all thy faith and paſſion,
Ev'n of thy fooliſh death, ſhall all be mine.

Adr. Thine, ſay'ſt thou, monſter?
Shall my love be thine?
Oh, I can bear no more!
Thy cunning engines have with labour rais'd
My heavy anger, like a mighty weight,
To fall and ſtrike thee dead.

See

† *Eur.* What's now thy conſcience?

Cre. 'Tis my ſlave, my drudge, my ſupple glove,
My upper garment, to put on, throw off,
As I think beſt: 'tis my obedient conſcience.

See here thy nuptials; ſee, thou raſh *Ixion*, [*Draws.*
Thy promis'd *Juno* vaniſh'd in a cloud,
And in her room avenging thunder rolls
To blaſt thee thus——Come both—— [*Both draw.*

Cre. 'Tis what I wiſh'd——
Now ſee whoſe arm can launch the ſurer bolt,
And who's the better *Jove*——

Eur. Help, murder, help! [*Fight.*

Enter Hæmon *and Guards, run betwixt them, and beat down their ſwords.*

Hæm. Hold, hold your impious hands! I think the furies,
To whom this grove is hallow'd, have inſpir'd you.
Now, by my ſoul, the holieſt earth of *Thebes*
You have profan'd with war. Nor tree, nor plant
Grows here, but what is fed with magic juice,
All full of human ſouls, that cleave their barks,
To dance at midnight by the moon's pale beams.
At leaſt two hundred years theſe reverend ſhades
Have known no blood, but of black ſheep and oxen,
Shed by the prieſt's own hand to *Proſerpine*.

Adr. Forgive a ſtranger's ignorance—I knew not
The honours of the place.

Hæm. Thou, *Creon*, didſt.
Not *OEdipus*, were all his foes here lodg'd,
Durſt violate the religion of theſe groves,
To touch one ſingle hair; but muſt, unarm'd,
Parle, as in truce, or ſurlily avoid
What moſt he long'd to kill.

Cre. I drew not firſt;
But in my own defence.

Adr. I was provok'd
Beyond man's patience; all, reproach could urge,

Was us'd to kindle one not apt to bear. ‡

Hæm. 'Tis *OEdipus*, not I must judge this act.
You *Creon*, and you *Diocles* retire;

[Creon, *and* Diocles *go out here.*

For lo the holy Brotherhood of Priests
Approach this place——none at these rites assist,
But you th' accus'd, who from *Tiresias'* mouth
Must be absolv'd, or doom'd——expect him then
Full of the god, whom he all night has sought
With pray'rs, and invocations, in yon cave
Beneath that rock, at the grove's utmost bound.

Adr. I bear my fortune.

Eur. I provoke my trial.

Hæm. 'Tis at hand.
And see the priests, a venerable band——
Some lead the hallow'd victim, and some bear
The golden vessels for the sacrifice.

Enter the priests, their heads crown'd with yew.

Eur. Is there no god,

Who

‡ *Hæm.* 'Tis *OEdipus*, not I, must judge this act.
Lord *Creon*, you and *Diocles* retire;
Tiresias and the brotherhood of priests
Approach the place. None at these rites assist,
But you th' accus'd, who by the mouth of *Laius*
Must be absolv'd, or doom'd.
Adr. I bear my fortune.
Eur. And I provoke my trial.
Hæm. 'Tis at hand:
For see, the prophet comes with vervain crown'd,
The priests with yew; a venerable band.
We leave you to the gods.

[*Exit* Hæmon *with* Creon *and* Diocles.

Enter Tiresias, *led by* Manto; *the priests follow, all cloathed in long black habits.*

Tir. Approach ye lovers;

Ill-fated

Who can controul the malice of our fate?
Or have the giants heav'n!
First Prieſt.——The gods are juſt——
But how can finite fathom infinite?
Reaſon, alas! it does not know itſelf.
Yet man, vain man, would with this ſhort-lin'd plummet,
Fathom the vaſt abyſs of heavenly juſtice.
Whatever is, is in it's cauſes juſt;
Since all things are by fate; while purblind man
Sees but a part o'th'chain, the neareſt link,
His eyes not carry'ng to that equal beam,
That poiſes all above. *

[* *This fine paſſage is transferred to the preſent ſpeaker from* Tireſias, *who makes his entrance a little later here than in the original.*]

Eur. Then we muſt die!
1ſt Prieſt. We know that——

Ill-fated pair, whom, ſeeing not, I know,
This day your kindly ſtars in heav'n were join'd;
When lo, an envious planet interpos'd,
And threaten'd both with death. I fear, I fear.
Eur. Is there no god ſo much a friend to love,
Who can controul the malice of our fate?
Are they all deaf? Or have the giants heav'n?
Tir. The gods are juſt——
But how can finite meaſure infinite!
Reaſon? Alas, it does not know itſelf;
Yet man, vain man, would, with this ſhort-lin'd plummet,
Fathom the vaſt abyſs of heav'nly juſtice.
Whatever is, is in its cauſes juſt;
Since all things are by fate. But purblind man
Sees but a part o' th' chain; the neareſt links;
His eyes not carrying to that equal beam
That poiſes all above.
Eur. Then we muſt die!
Tir. The danger's imminent this day.

And yet the danger's imminent this day.
But ceaſe, and you two lovers ſtand apart.
The time calls on———
And *Laius'* death ſhall ſoon be made more plain.
Let us perform the rites.

[*Solemn muſic. Enter more prieſts; ſome lead a black cow for the ſacrifice, alſo two ſheep, one black and one white* (See *Homer*, 11th Odyſſey, for this) *others bear torches and inſtruments for ſlaying the beaſts appointed for ſacrifice. They all retire a little into the grove, while* Adraſtus *and* Eurydice *ſtand on one ſide of the ſtage.*]

Let us perform the rites———
The ceremonies ſtay.———

The

Adr. Why then there's one day leſs for human ills;
And who would moan himſelf for ſuffering that
Which in a day muſt paſs? Something or nothing:
I ſhall be what I was again, before
I was *Adraſtus*.
Penurious Heav'n! canſt thou not add a night
To our one day? Give me a night with her,
And I'll give all the reſt.
Tir. She broke her vow
Firſt made to *Creon*. But the time calls on;
And *Laius'* death muſt now be made more plain.
How loth I am to have recourſe to rites
So full of horror, that I once rejoice
I want the uſe of ſight.
1 *Pr.* The ceremonies ſtay.
Tir. Chooſe the darkeſt part o'the grove,
Such as ghoſts at noon-day love.
Dig a trench, and dig it nigh
Where the bones of *Laius* lie,
Altars rais'd of turf or ſtone,
Will th' infernal pow'rs have none.
Anſwer me if this be done?
All Pr. 'Tis done.

Tir.

The SONG.

I.

Chuſe the darkeſt part o'the grove,
Such as ghoſts at noon-day love.
Dig a trench, and dig it nigh
Where the bones of *Laius* lie.
Altars, rais'd of turf or ſtone,
Will th'infernal pow'rs have none.
Anſwer me if this be done?
All the prieſts anſwer, 'Tis done.

II.

Is the ſacrifice made fit?
Draw her backward to the pit.
Draw the heifer by the back;
Barren let her be, and black.
Cut the curled hair that grows
Full between her horns and brows;
And turn your faces from the ſun.
Anſwer me if this be done?
All the Prieſts anſwer. 'Tis done.

III.

Pour in blood, and blood-like wine,
To mother Earth and *Proſerpina*.
Mingle milk into the ſtream,
Feaſt the ghoſts that love the ſteam:

Snatch

Tir. Is the ſacrifice made fit?
Draw her backward to the pit;
Draw the barren heifer back;
Barren let her be, and black.
Cut the curled hair that grows
Full betwixt her horns and brows;
And turn your faces from the ſun.
Anſwer me if this be done?
All Pr. 'Tis done.

Tir.

Snatch a brand from fun'ral pile,
Toſs it in, to make them boil;
And turn your faces from the ſun.
Anſwer me if this is done?

Other Prieſts anſwer. All is done.

1ſt Prieſt. Then let the King approach.

[*One or two of the Prieſts go out and return with* OEdipus.

Enter OEdipus.

What omen ſaw'ſt thou?

Tir. Pour in blood, and blood-like wine,
To mother Earth and *Proſerpine*;
Mingle milk into the ſtream;
Feaſt the ghoſts that love the ſteam;
Snatch a brand from fun'ral pile,
Toſs it in, to make them boil;
And turn your faces from the ſun.
Anſwer me, if all be done?

All Pr. All is done.

[*Peals of thunder and flaſhes of lightning; then groaning below the ſtage.*

Man. Oh, what laments are thoſe?

Tir. The groans of ghoſts that cleave the earth with pain,
And heave it up; they pant and ſtick half way.

[*The ſtage wholly darkened.*

Man. And now a ſudden darkneſs covers all;
True, genuine night; night added to the groves;
The fogs are blown full in the face of heav'n.

Tir. Am I but half obey'd? Infernal gods,
Muſt you have muſic too? Then tune your voices,
And let them have ſuch ſounds as hell ne'er heard
Since *Orpheus* brib'd the ſhades.

Muſic firſt, then ſing.

1. Hear, ye ſullen pow'rs below;
Hear, ye taſkers of the dead:
2. You that boiling caldrons blow,
You that ſcum the molten lead.
3. You that pinch with red-hot tongs;

1. You

1ſt Prieſt. Juſt where the light ſteals through the parting boughs,
Acroſs the entrance of yon piny ſhade,
Methought———

OEdip.

2. You that drive the trembling hoſts
Of poor, poor ghoſts,
With your ſharpen'd prongs.
2. You that thruſt them off the brim.
3. You that plunge them when they ſwim,
1. Till they drown,
Till they go,
On a row,
Down, down, down,
Ten thouſand, thouſand, thouſand fathoms low.
Chorus. Till they drown, *&c.*
2. Muſic for a while
Shall your cares beguile,
Wond'ring how your pains were eas'd;
2. And diſdaining to be pleas'd,
3. Till *Alecto* free the dead
From their eternal bands;
Till the ſnakes drop from her head,
And whip from out her hands,
1. Come away,
Do not ſtay,
But obey,
While we play,
For hell's broke up, and ghoſts have holiday.
Chorus. Come away, *&c.*

[*A flaſh of lightning: the ſtage is made bright, and the ghoſts are ſeen paſſing betwixt the trees.*

1. *Laius!* 2. *Laius!* 3. *Laius!*
1. Hear! 2. Hear! 3. Hear!
Tir. Hear and appear.
By the Fates that ſpun thy thread,
Cho. Which are three.
Tir. By the furies fierce and dread,
Cho. Which are three.
Tir. By the judges of the dead,

Cho.

OEdip. Say quickly.

1st Priest. A young ſtork——

OEdip.

Cho. Which are three.
Three times three.
Tir. By Hell's blue flame;
By the *Stigian* lake;
And by *Demogorgon's* name,
At which ghoſts quake,
Hear and appear?

[*The ghoſt of* Laius *riſes, armed in his chariot, as he was ſlain; and behind his chariot ſit the three who were murder'd with him.*

Ghoſt of Laius. Why haſt thou drawn me from my pains below
To ſuffer worſe above; to ſee the day,
And *Thebes* more hated? Hell is heav'n to *Thebes.*
For pity ſend me back, where I may hide,
In willing night, this ignominious head.
In hell I ſhun the public ſcorn; and then
They hunt me for their ſport, and hoot me as I fly:
Behold, ev'n now, they grin at my gor'd ſide,
And chatter at my wounds.
Tir. I pity thee.
Tell but why *Thebes* is for thy death accurs'd,
And I'll unbind the charm.
Ghoſt. Oh, ſpare my ſhame!
Tir. Are theſe two innocent?
Ghoſt. Of my death they are.
But he who holds my crown, Oh, muſt I ſpeak!
Was doom'd to do what nature moſt abhors.
The gods foreſaw it, and forbade his being
Before he yet was born. I broke their laws,
And cloth'd with fleſh his pre-exiſting ſoul,
Some kinder pow'r, too weak for deſtiny,
Took pity, and indu'd his new-form'd maſs
With temperance, juſtice, prudence, fortitude,
And every kingly virtue. But in vain;
For Fate, that ſent him hoodwink'd to the world,
Perform'd its work by his miſtaken hands.
Aſk'ſt thou who murder'd me? 'Twas *OEdipus.*
Who ſtains my bed with inceſt? *OEdipus,*
For whom then are you curs'd, but *OEdipus.*

He

OEdip. Speak———

Prieſt. A ſtork,
That bore his aged parent on his back,
Till, wearied with the weight, he ſhook him off,
And peck'd out both his eyes.

Other Prieſts. O dire omen!
O wretched *OEdipus*!———O fatal King!

OEdip. What mean thoſe exclamations on my name?

U I

He comes! the parracide! I cannot bear him!
My wounds ake at him! Oh, his murd'rous breath
Venoms my airy ſubſtance! Hence with him,
Baniſh him, ſweep him out; the plagues he bears
Will blaſt your fields, and mark his way with ruin.
From *Thebes*, my throne, my bed, let him be driven;
Do you forbid him earth, and I'll forbid him heav'n.

[*Ghoſt deſcends.*

Enter OEdipus, Creon, Hæmon, *&c.*

OEdip. What's this? Methought ſome peſtilential blaſt
Struck me juſt entering; and ſome unſeen hand
Struggled to puſh me backward. Tell me why
My hair ſtands briſtling up, why my fleſh trembles?
You ſtare at me! Then hell has been among ye,
And ſome lag fiend yet lingers in the grove.

Tir. What omen ſaw'ſt thou, ent'ring?

OEdip. A young ſtork,
That bore his aged parent on his back,
Till, weary with the weight, he ſhook him off,
And peck'd out both his eyes.

Adr. Oh, *OEdipus!*

Eur. Oh, wretched *OEdipus!*

Tir. Oh, fatal king!

OEdip. What mean theſe exclamations on my name?
I thank the gods, no ſecret thoughts reproach me.
No, I dare challenge Heav'n to turn me outward,
And ſhake my ſoul quite empty in your ſight.
Then wonder not that I can bear unmov'd
Theſe fix'd regards, and ſilent threats of eyes.

A

I thank the gods no ſecret thoughts reproach me.
Then wonder not that I can bear unmov'd
Theſe fix'd regards, and ſilent threats of eyes.
A gen'rous boldneſs dwells with innocence,
And conſcious virtue is allow'd ſome pride.

1ſt Prieſt. But lo, the prophet comes——with meaſur'd ſteps,
Advancing from the depth of yon dark wood.

OEdip. He looks as one——

[*Enter* Tireſias, *his head crown'd with vervain.*

Let looſe from hell's black regions, under ground,
Where he had long convers'd with fiends and furies—
(Or *Gorgon*'s ſelf beholding in dread viſion.)
Tireſias, thee I ſummon by thy prieſthood,
Unfold thine oracle,——
And be it as it may,——or good——or ill——
Tell me, what ſay the gods?
And who's the deſtin'd head? *

[* *In the original it is* guilty head.]

Tir. Let me not anſwer.

OEdip. Be dumb then, and betray thy native ſoil

To

A generous fierceneſs dwells with innocence;
And conſcious virtue is allow'd ſome pride.

Tir. Thou know'ſt not what thou ſay'ſt.

OEdip. What mutters he? Tell me, *Eurydice*—
Thou ſhak'ſt—thy ſoul's a woman. Speak, *Adraſtus*,
And boldly, as thou met'ſt my arm in fight.
Dar'ſt thou not ſpeak? Why, then 'tis bad indeed.
Tireſias, thee I ſummon by thy prieſthood;
Tell me what news from hell; where *Laius* points,
And who's the guilty head?

Tir. Let me not anſwer.

OEdip. Be dumb, then, and betray thy native ſoil
To farther plagues.

Tir. I dare not name him to thee.

OEdip.

To further plagues.

Tir. I dare not name him to thee.

OEdip. Dar'ſt thou converſe with hell, and canſt thou fear
An human name?

Tireſias. Urge me no more to tell a truth, which known
Would make thee more unhappy——'twill be found,
Though I am ſilent——'twill be known too ſoon.

OEdip. Thou old and obſtinate!——then thou thyſelf
Art author, or accomplice of this murder,
And ſhun'ſt the juſtice which, by public ban,
Thou haſt incurr'd.

Tir. Oh! if the guilt were mine,
It were not half ſo great——
——Know, wretched man,
Thou, only thou art guilty; thy own curſe
Falls heavy on thyſelf——
For Fate that ſent thee hoodwink'd to the world,
Perform'd its work by thy miſtaking hands. *

* Theſe two lines are introduced here from thee ſpeech of *Laius'* ghoſt.

OEdip. Speak that again ——

OEdip. Dar'ſt thou converſe with hell, and canſt thou fear
An human name?

Tir. Urge me no more to tell a thing, which, known,
Would make the more unhappy. 'Twill be found,
Tho' I am ſilent.

OEdip. Old and obſtinate! Then thou thyſelf
Art author or accomplice of this murder;
And ſhun'ſt the juſtice, which, by public ban,
Thou haſt incurr'd.

Tir. Oh, if the guilt were mine,
It were not half ſo great! Know, wretched man,
Thou, only thou art guilty; thy own curſe
Falls heavy on thyſelf.

OEdip. Speak this again:
But ſpeak it to the winds when they are loudeſt,

But ſpeak it to the winds, when they are loudeſt,
Or to the raging ſeas; they'll hear as ſoon,
And ſooner will believe.

Tir. Then hear me, Heav'n!
For bluſhing thou haſt ſeen it; hear me, Earth!
Whoſe hollow womb could not contain this murder,
But ſent it back to light——and thou, Hell, hear,
——*OEdipus* murder'd *Laius*.

OEdip. Rot the tongue,
And blaſted be the mouth that ſpoke that lie!
Thou blind of ſight, but thou more blind of ſoul!
Oh! why has prieſthood privilege to lie?
Why ſtandſt thou here impoſtor? Guards, there ſeize him,
And bear him quickly hence——away——away.
——So old, and yet ſo wicked!——

Tir.

Or to the raging ſeas; they'll hear as ſoon,
And ſooner will believe.

Tir. Then hear me, Heav'n,
For, bluſhing, thou haſt ſeen it: hear me, Earth,
Whoſe hollow womb could not contain this murder,
But ſent it back to light: and thou, Hell, hear me,
Whoſe own black ſeal has 'firm'd this horrid truth:
OEdipus murder'd *Laius*.

OEdip. Rot the tongue,
And blaſted be the mouth that ſpoke that lie.
Thou blind of ſight, but thou more blind of ſoul—

Tir. Thy parents thought not ſo.

OEdip. Who were my parents?

Tir. Thou ſhalt know too ſoon.

OEdip. Why ſeek I truth from thee?
The ſmiles of courtiers, and the harlot's tears,
The tradeſman's oaths, and mourning of an heir,
Are truths to what prieſts tell.
Oh, why has prieſthood privilege to lie,
And yet to be believ'd!—Thy age protects thee—

Tir.

Tir. Prepare then, wretched prince, prepare to hear ‖
A ſtory that ſhall turn thee into ſtone.
Could there be hewn a monſtrous gap in nature,
A flaw made through the centre by ſome god,
Through which the groans of ghoſts might reach the ears,
They would not wound thee as this ſtory will.

‖ This ſpeech belongs to *Jocaſta* in the original, and brought here from the 4th act.

[*As he is conducted away by the guards, he turns back, and, looking at* OEdipus, *ſays,*
Farewell! remember *Laius.*

[*The other prieſts follow, and alſo repeat,*
Remember *Laius.*

[*Exeunt prieſts,* Tireſias, *and guards.*

OEdip.

Tir. Thou canſt not kill me; 'tis not in thy fate,
As 'twas to kill thy father, wed thy mother,
And beget ſons, thy brothers.

OEdip. Riddles, riddles!

Tir. Thou art thyſelf a riddle, a perplex'd,
Obſcure ænigma, which, when thou unty'ſt,
Thou ſhalt be found and loſt.

OEdip. Impoſſible!
Adraſtus, ſpeak; and, as thou art a king,
Whoſe royal word is ſacred, clear my fame.

Adr. Would I could!

OEdip. Ha! wilt thou not? Can that plebeian vice
Of lying mount to kings? Can they be tainted?
Then truth is loſt on earth.

Cre. The cheat's too groſs.
Adraſtus is his oracle, and he,
The pious juggler, but *Adraſtus'* organ.

OEdip. 'Tis plain; the prieſt's ſuborn'd to free the priſ'ner.

Cre. And turn the guilt on you.

OEdip. Oh, honeſt *Creon*, how haſt thou been bely'd!

Eur. Hear me.

Cre. She's brib'd to ſave her lover's life.

Adr. If *OEdipus*, thou think'ſt——

Cre. Hear him not ſpeak.

Adr. Then hear theſe holy men.

Cre.

OEdip. My hair ſtands briſtling up, and my fleſh tremble:
My ſoul ſtarts in me——hah!
——Did I kill *Laius?*
Then I walk'd ſleeping——in ſome frightful dream,
And kill'd him ſo——but 'tis impoſſible——
It cannot be ev'n this remoteſt way,
But ſome dark hint would juſtle forward now,
And goad my memory.——O my *Jocaſta!*

Enter

Cre. Prieſts, prieſts, all brib'd, all prieſts!

OEdip. Adraſtus, I have found thee:
The malice of a vanquiſh'd man has ſeiz'd thee.

Adr. If envy, and not truth——

OEdip. I'll hear no more: away with him.

[Hæmon *takes him off by force*; Creon *and* Eurydice *follow.*

[*To* Tir.] Why ſtand'ſt thou here, impoſtor?
So old and yet ſo wicked!—Lie for gain,
And gain ſo ſhort as age can promiſe thee!

Tir. So ſhort a time as I have yet to live
Exceeds thy pointed hour. Remember *Laius*—
No more—if e'er we meet again, 'twill be
In mutual darkneſs; we ſhall feel before us,
To reach each other's hand—Remember *Laius.*

[*Exit* Tireſias: *Prieſts follow.*

OEdip. Remember *Laius!* that's the burden ſtill.
Murder and inceſt! But to hear them nam'd
My ſoul ſtarts in me: the good centinel
Stands to his weapons, takes the firſt alarm,
To guard me from ſuch crimes. Did I kill *Laius?*
Then I walk'd ſleeping, in ſome frightful dream;
My ſoul then ſtole my body out by night,
And brought me back to bed ere morning-wake.
It cannot be, ev'n this remoteſt way;
But ſome dark hint would juſtle forward now,
And goad my memory——Oh my *Jocaſta!*

Enter *Jocaſta.*

Joc. Why are you thus diſturb'd?

OEdip. Why, would'ſt thou think it?

No

Enter Jocaſta.

Joc. Why are you thus diſorder'd?

OEdip. They accuſe me
Of murdering *Laius*.——did *Tireſias* ever
Before this day accuſe me?

Joc. Never.

OEdip. Have you ere this inquired who did the murder?

Joc. Often; but ſtill in vain.

OEdip. I'm ſatisfied.

Joc. Ev'n oracles
Are always doubtful, and are ſometimes forg'd:

Laius

No leſs than murder.

Joc. Murder! what of murder?

OEdip. Is murder then no more? Add parricide
And inceſt—bear not theſe a frightful ſound?

Joc. Alas!

OEdip. How poor a pity is alas,
For two ſuch crimes!—Was *Laius* us'd to lie?

Joc. Oh, no! the moſt ſincere, plain, honeſt man;
One who abhorr'd a lie.

OEdip. Then he has got that quality in hell.
He charges me——but why accuſe I him?
I did not hear him ſpeak it. They accuſe me,
The *Prieſt*, *Adraſtus*, and *Eurydice*,
Of murdering *Laius*——Tell me while I think on't,
Has old *Tireſias* practis'd long this trade?

Joc. What trade?

OEdip. Why, this foretelling trade.

Joc. For many years.

OEdip. Has he before this day accus'd me?

Joc. Never.

OEdip. Have you, ere this, inquir'd who did this murder?

Joc. Often; but ſtill in vain.

OEdip. I am ſatisfy'd.
Then 'tis an infant-lie; but one day old.
The oracle takes place before the prieſt;
The blood of *Laius* was to murder *Laius*;
I'm not of *Laius*' blood.

Laius had one, which never was fulfill'd,
Nor ever can be now.

OEdip. And what foretold it?

Joc. That he ſhould have a ſon by me, fore-doom'd
The murderer of his father. True, indeed,
A ſon was born; but, to prevent that crime,
The wretched infant of a guilty fate,
Bor'd through his untry'd feet, and bound with cords,
On a bleak mountain naked was expos'd.
The King himſelf liv'd many, many years,
And found a different fate; by robbers murder'd,
Where three ways meet. Yet theſe are oracles;
And this the faith we owe them.

OEdip. Say'ſt thou, woman?
By Heav'n thou haſt awaken'd ſomething in me,
That ſhakes my very ſoul!

Joc. What new diſturbance?——

OEdip. Methought thou ſaid'ſt, or do I dream thou ſaid'ſt it?
This murder was on *Laius'* perſon done
Where three ways meet.

Joc. So common fame reports.

OEdip. Would it had lied!

Joc. Why, good my Lord? *

OEdip. Say, where, where was it done?

Joc. Mean you the murder?

OEdip. Could'ſt thou not anſwer without naming murder?

Joc. They ſay in *Phocide*; on the verge that parts it
From *Daulis*, and from *Delphos*.

OEdip. So——How long? When happen'd this?

Joc. Some little time before you came to *Thebes*.

OEdip.

* *OEdip.* No Queſtions.
'Tis buſy time with me; diſpatch mine firſt.

OEdip. What will the gods do with me?

Joc. What means that thought? †

OEdip. How old was *Laius*, what his ſhape, his ſtature,
His aſpect, and his mien?
—— —— Quick—quick, your anſwer—

Joc. Big made he was, and tall; his port was fierce,
Erect his countenance; manly majeſty
Sat in his front, and darted from his eyes,
Commanding all he viewed; his hair juſt grizzled,
As in a green old age ‡

OEdip. How was the King
Attended when he travell'd?

Joc. By four ſervants.
He went out privately.

OEdip. Well counted ſtill!
One 'ſcap'd, I hear. What ſince became of him?

Joc. When he beheld you firſt, as King in *Thebes*,
He kneel'd, and, trembling, begg'd I would diſmiſs him.
He had my leave; and now he lives retir'd.

OEdip. This man muſt be produc'd; he muſt, *Jocaſta*.

Joc. He ſhall—Yet have I leave to aſk you why?

OEdip. Yes, you ſhall know; for where ſhould I repoſe
The anguiſh of my ſoul, but in your breaſt?

† *OEdip.* Something—But 'tis not yet your turn to aſk.
How old was *Laius*, what his ſhape, his ſtature,
His action, and his mien? Quick, quick, your anſwer—

‡ As in a green old age. Bate but his years,
You are his picture.
OEdip. [*Aſide.*] Pray Heav'n he drew me not! Am I his picture?*
[* This is a conceit unſuiting *OEdipus*'s diſtreſs; beſides that, the alluſion ſuited not the times, long before the invention of pourtrait painting.]
Joc. So I have often told you.
OEdip. True, you have:
Add that unto the reſt.

I need not tell you *Corinth* claims my birth;
My parents, *Polybus* and *Merope*,
Two royal names; their only child am I.
It happen'd once, 'twas at a bridal feaſt,
One, warm with wine, told me I was a foundling,
Not the King's ſon: I, ſtung with this reproach,
Struck him; my father heard of it; the man
Was made aſk pardon, and the buſineſs huſh'd.

Joc. 'Twas ſomewhat odd.

OEdip. And ſtrangely it perplex'd me.
I ſtole away to *Delphos*, and implor'd
The god to tell my certain parentage.
He bade me ſeek no farther; 'twas my fate
To kill my father, and pollute his bed,
By marrying her who bore me.

Joc. Vain, vain oracles!

OEdip. But yet they frighted me.
I look'd on *Corinth* as a place accurs'd;
Reſolv'd my deſtiny ſhould wait in vain,
And never catch me there.

Joc. Too nice a fear.

OEdip. Suſpend your thoughts, and flatter not too ſoon.
Juſt in the place you nam'd, where three ways meet,
And near that time, five perſons I encounter'd; *
One was too like
The perſon you deſcribed for *Laius*: inſolent
And fierce they were, as men who liv'd on ſpoil;
I judg'd them robbers, and by force repell'd
The force they us'd. In ſhort, four men I ſlew;
The fifth, upon his knees, demanding life,
My mercy gave it——Bring me comfort now.
If I ſlew *Laius*, what can be more wretched?

From

* One was too like (Heav'n grant it prove not him!)

From *Thebes* and you my curſe has baniſh'd me;
From *Corinth*, fate.

Joc. Perplex not thus your mind.
My huſband fell by multitudes oppreſs'd;
So *Phorbas* ſaid. This band you chanc'd to meet,
And murder'd not my *Laius*, but reveng'd him.

OEdip. There's all my hope: Let *Phorbas* tell me this,
And I ſhall live again.
To you, great gods*, I make my laſt appeal;
Or clear my virtues—or my crimes reveal.
If wandering in the maze of fate I run,
And backward trod thoſe ‡ paths I ſought to ſhun,
Impute my errors to your own decree;
My hands are guilty, but my heart is free.

[*Exeunt.*

END of ACT the Third.

ACT IV.

Enter Pyracmon *and* Creon.

PYRACMON.

SOME buſineſs of import, that triumph wears, †
You ſeem to go with.
Sure' you ſmile revenge,
And I could gladly hear.

Cre. Wouldſt thou believe,

* In the original *good gods* ‡ *the paths.*

† You ſeem to go with, nor is it hard to gueſs
When you are pleas'd, by a malicious joy,
Whoſe red and fiery beams caſt through your viſage
A glowing pleaſure. Sure you ſmile revenge,

This giddy, frantic man, whom old *Tireſias* *
Has thunder-ſtruck with heavy accuſation,
Tho' conſcious of no inward guilt, yet fears;
He fears *Jocaſta*, fears himſelf, his ſhadow;
He fears the multitude; and, which is worth
An age of laughter, out of all mankind,
He chuſes me to be his orator:
Swears that *Adraſtus* and the lean-look'd prophet
Are joint conſpirators; and wiſh'd me to
Appeaſe the raving *Thebans*; which I ſwore
To do.

Pyr. A dangerous undertaking;
Directly oppoſite to your own intereſt.

Cre. No, dull *Pyracmon*; when I left his preſence,
With all the wings with which revenge could imp
My flight, I gain'd the midſt o' the city;
There, ſtanding on a pile of dead and dying,
I to the mad and ſickly multitude,
With interrupting ſobs, cry'd out, Oh, *Thebes*!
Oh, wretched *Thebes*, thy king, thy *OEdipus*,
This barbarous ſtranger, this uſurper, monſter,
Is by the oracle, the wiſe *Tireſias*,
Proclaim'd the murderer of thy royal *Laius*!
Jocaſta, too, no longer now my ſiſter,
Is found complotter in the horrid deed.
Here I renounce all tyes of blood and nature,
For thee, Oh, *Thebes*, dear *Thebes*, poor bleeding *Thebes*!
And there I wept; and then the rabble howl'd,
And roar'd, and with a thouſand antic mouths,
Gabbled revenge; revenge was all the cry.

Pyr. This cannot fail; I ſee you on the throne,
And *OEdipus* caſt out.

Cre.

* This giddy, *hair-brain'd* King, whom old *Tireſias*
Hair-brain'd is a vulgar profaic turn.

Cre. Then ſtraight came on
Alcander, with a wild, and bellowing crowd,
Whom he had wrought; I whiſper'd him to join,
And head the forces while the heat was in them.
So, to the palace I return'd, to meet
The King, and greet him with another ſtory.
But ſee, he enters.

Enter OEdipus *and* Jocaſta, *attended.*

OEdip. Said you that *Phorbas* is arriv'd, and yet
Entreats he may return, without being aſk'd
Of ought concerning what we have diſcover'd?

Joc. He ſtarted when I told him your intent;
Replying, what he knew of that affair
Would give no ſatisfaction to the King;
Then, falling on his knees, begg'd, as for life,
To be diſmiſs'd from court: he trembled too,
As if convulſive death had ſeiz'd upon him,
And ſtammer'd in his abrupt pray'r ſo wildly,
That had he been the murderer of *Laius*,
Guilt and diſtraction could not more have ſhook him.

OEdip. By your deſcription, ſure as plagues and death
Lay waſte our *Thebes*, ſome deed that ſhuns the light
Begot thoſe fears; if thou reſpect'ſt my peace,
Secure him, dear *Jocaſta*; for my genius
Shrinks at his name.

Joc. Rather let him go;
So my poor boding heart would have it be,
Without a reaſon.

OEdip. Hark, the *Thebans* come!
Therefore retire: and once more, if thou lov'ſt me,
Let *Phorbas* be retain'd.

Joc. You ſhall, while I
Have life, be ſtill obey'd:

In

In vain you ſooth me with your ſoft endearments,
And ſet the faireſt countenance to view;
Your gloomy eyes, my Lord, betray a deadneſs,
And inward languiſhing: That oracle
Eats like a ſubtle worm its venom'd way,
Preys on your heart, and rots the noble core,
Howe'er the beauteous outſide ſhews ſo lovely.

OEdip. Oh, thou wilt kill me with thy love's exceſs!
All, all is well; retire, the *Thebans* come. * [*Exit* Joc.

[OEdipus *ſeems to pauſe awhile, then ſtarts, and exclaims*

OEdip. Ha! again that ſcream of woe!
Or is it but the work of melancholy?
When the ſun ſets, ſhadows, that ſhew'd at noon
But ſmall, appear moſt long and terrible;
So when we think Fate hovers o'er our heads
Our apprehenſions ſhoot beyond all bounds,
Owls, ravens, crickets, ſeem the watch of death,
Nature's worſt vermin ſcare her god-like ſons;
Echoes, the very leavings of a voice,
Grow babbling ghoſts, and call us to our graves:
Each mole-hill thought ſwells to a huge *Olympus*,
While we fantaſtic dreamers heave and puff,
And ſweat with an imagination's weight;
As if, like *Atlas*, with theſe mortal ſhoulders
We could ſuſtain the burden of the world.

[Creon *comes forward.*

Cre. Oh, ſacred Sir, my royal Lord——

OEdip. What now?
Thou ſeem'ſt affrighted at ſome dreadful action,
Thy breath comes ſhort, thy darted eyes are fix'd

On

* *Ghoſt. OEdipus!*
OEdip. Ha! again that ſtream of woe!
Thrice have I heard, thrice ſince the morning dawn'd
It hallow'd loud, as if my guardian ſpirit
Call'd from ſome vaulted manſion, *OEdipus!*

On me for aid, as if thou wert purſu'd;
I ſent thee to the *Thebans*: ſpeak thy wonder;
Fear not, this palace is a ſanctuary,
The King himſelf's thy guard.

Cre. For me, alas!
My life's not worth a thought, when weigh'd with yours!
But fly, my Lord: fly as your life is ſacred.
Your fate is precious to your faithful *Creon*,
Who therefore, on his knees, thus proſtrate, begs
You would remove from *Thebes* that vows your ruin.
When I but offer'd at your innocence,
They gather'd ſtones and menac'd me with death,
And drove me through the ſtreets, with imprecations
Againſt your ſacred perſon, and thoſe traitors
Who juſtify'd your guilt, which curs'd *Tireſias*
Told, as from heav'n, was cauſe of their deſtruction.

OEdip. Riſe, worthy *Creon*, haſte and take our guard,
Rank them in equal part upon the ſquare,
Then open every gate of this our palace,
And let the torrent in. Hark, it comes. [*Shout.*
I hear them roar: begone, and break down all
The dams that would oppoſe their furious paſſage.

[*Exit* Creon *with guards.*

Enter Adraſtus, *his ſword drawn.*

Adr. Your city
Is all in arms, all bent to your deſtruction;
I heard but now, where I was cloſe confin'd,
A thund'ring ſhout, which made my gaolers vaniſh,
Cry, Fire the palace; where's the cruel king?
Yet, by th' infernal gods, thoſe awful pow'rs, *

* That have accus'd you, which theſe ears have heard,
And theſe eyes ſeen,——————

Theſe lines are omitted, becauſe they refer to the appearance of the ghoſt.

I ſwear, my King, I believe you guiltleſs.
For, ſince I knew the royal *OEdipus*,
I have obſerv'd in all his acts ſuch truth
And god-like clearneſs; that to the laſt guſh
Of blood and ſpirits, I'll defend his life,
And here have ſworn to periſh by his ſide.

OEdip. Be witneſs, gods, how near this touches me.
[*Embracing him.*
Oh, what, what recompence can glory make?

Adr. Defend your innocence, ſpeak like yourſelf,
And awe the rebels with your dauntleſs virtue.
But hark! the ſtorm comes nearer.

OEdip. Let it come.
The force of majeſty is never known
But in a general wrack: then, then is ſeen
The difference 'twixt a threſhold and a throne.

Enter Creon, Pyracmon, Alcander, Tireſias, Thebans.

Alc. Where, where's this cruel king? *Thebans*, behold
There ſtands your plague, the ruin, deſolation
Of this unhappy——Speak; ſhall I kill him?
Or ſhall he be caſt out to baniſhment?

All Theb. To baniſhment, away with him.

OEdip. Hence, you barbarians, to your ſlaviſh diſtance! †
Did I for this relieve you when beſieg'd
By this fierce prince, when coop'd within your walls,
And to the very brink of fate reduc'd?
When lean-jaw'd famine made more havock of you,
Than does the plague? But I rejoice I know you,
Know the baſe ſtuff that temper'd your vile ſouls:

The

† Fix to the earth your ſordid looks; for he
Who ſtirs, dares more than mad-men, fiends, or furies.
Who dares to face me, by the gods, as well
May brave the majeſty of thund'ring *Jove*.

The gods be prais'd, I needed not your empire,
Born to a greater, nobler, of my own;
Nor ſhall the Sceptre of the earth now win me
To rule ſuch brutes, ſo barbarous a people.

Adr. Methinks, my Lord, I ſee a ſad repentance,
A general conſternation ſpread among them.

OEdip. My reign is at an end; yet ere I finiſh—
I'll do a juſtice that becomes a monarch,
A monarch, who, i'th' midſt of ſwords and javelins,
Dares act as on his throne encompaſt round
With nations for his guard. *Alcander*, you
Are nobly born, therefore ſhall loſe your head:
[*Seizes him.*
Here, *Hæmon*, take him; but for this, and this,
Let cords diſpatch them. Hence away with them.

Tir. Oh, ſacred prince, pardon diſtracted *Thebes*,
Pardon her, if ſhe acts by Heav'n's award;
If that th' infernal ſpirits have declar'd
The depth of fate, and if our oracles
May ſpeak, Oh, do not too ſeverely deal,
But let thy wretched *Thebes* at leaſt complain:
If thou art guilty, Heav'n will make it known:
If innocent, then let *Tireſias* die.

OEdip. I take thee at thy word; haſte, ſave *Alcander*:
I ſwear the prophet, or the king ſhall die.
Be witneſs, all you *Thebans*, of my oath;
And *Phorbas* be the umpire.

Tir. I ſubmit. ‡

‡ [*Trumpets ſound.*

OEdip. What means thoſe trumpets?

The flouriſh of Trumpets in this place is omitted, for a reaſon mentioned in a note near the beginning of the ſecond Act.

Enter Hæmon, *with* Alcander, *&c.*

Hæm. From your native country,
Great Sir, the fam'd *Ægeon* is arriv'd,
That renown'd favourite of the king your father:
He comes as an ambaſſador from *Corinth*,
And ſues for audience.

OEdip. Haſte, *Hæmon*, fly, and tell him that I burn
T' embrace him.

Hæm. The Queen, my Lord, at preſent holds him
In private conf'rence; but behold her here.

Enter Jocaſta, Eurydice, *&c.*

Joc. Hail, happy *OEdipus*, happieſt of kings!
Henceforth be bleſt, bleſt as thou canſt deſire,
Sleep without fears the blackeſt nights away;
Let furies haunt thy palace, thou ſhalt ſleep
Secure, thy ſlumbers ſhall be ſoft and gentle
As infant dreams.

OEdip. What does the ſoul of all my joys intend?
And whither would this rapture?

Joc. Oh, I could rave,
Pull down thoſe lying fanes, and burn that vault,
From whence reſounded thoſe falſe oracles,
That robb'd my love of reſt: if we muſt pray,
Rear in the ſtreets bright altars to the gods,
Let virgins heads adorn the ſacrifice;
And not a grey-beard forging prieſt come near,
To pry into the bowels of the victim,
And with his dotage mad the gaping world.
But ſee, the oracle that I will truſt,
True as the gods, and affable as men.

Enter Ægeon. *Kneels.*

OEdip. Oh, to my arms, welcome, my dear *Ægeon*;

Ten

Ten thouſand welcomes, †
Welcome as mercy to a man condemn'd!
Welcome to me,
As, to a ſinking mariner,
The lucky plank that bears him to the ſhore!
But ſpeak, Oh, tell me what ſo mighty joy
Is this thou bring'ſt, which ſo tranſports *Jocaſta?*

Joc. Peace, peace *Ægeon*, let *Jocaſta* tell him!
Oh, that I could for ever charm, as now,
My deareſt *OEdipus*; thy royal father,
Polybus, king of *Corinth*, is no more.

OEdip. Ha! can it be? *Ægeon*, anſwer me,
And ſpeak in ſhort what my *Jocaſta*'s tranſport
May over-do.

Æge. Since, in few words, my royal Lord, you aſk
To know the truth; king *Polybus* is dead.

OEdip. Oh, all you pow'rs, is't poſſible? What, dead!
But that the tempeſt of my joy may riſe
By juſt degrees, and hit at laſt the ſtars:
Say, how, how dy'd he? Ha! by ſword, by fire, *
By poiſon, or aſſaſſins? Speak, what way?
Or did he languiſh long in ſome diſeaſe?

Æge. Of no diſtemper, of no blaſt he dy'd,
But fell like autumn-fruit that mellow'd long:
Ev'n wonder'd at, becauſe he dropp'd no ſooner. ‡

† Ten thouſand welcomes, Oh, my foſter-father,
OEdipus did not yet know that *Ægeon* had preſerv'd him when expos'd in infancy, this appellation is therefore premature.

* Or water? By aſſaſſinates, or poiſon? Speak:

‡ Fate ſeem'd to wind him up for fourſcore years;
Yet freſhly ran he on ten winters more;

Till

Tir. Fate! Nature! Fortune! what is all this world?

OEdip. Now, dotard; now, thou blind, old, wizard, prophet,
Where are your boding ghoſts, your altars now;
Your birds of knowledge, that in duſky air
Chatter futurity? and where are now
Your oracles that call'd me parricide?
Is he not dead? laid in his monument?
And was not I in *Thebes* when Fate attack'd him?
Avaunt, be gone, you viſors of the gods!
Were I as other ſons, now I ſhould weep;
But, as I am, I've reaſon to rejoice;
And will, though his cold ſhade ſhould riſe and blaſt me.
Oh, for this death, let waters break their bounds,
Rocks, valleys, hills, with ſplitting *Io*'s ring:
Io, *Jocaſta*, *Io Pæan* ſing.

Tir. Who would not now conclude a happy end!
But all Fate's turns are ſwift and unexpected.

Æge. Your royal mother, *Merope*, as if
She had no ſoul ſince you forſook the land,
Waves
Till, like a clock worn out with eating time,
The wheels of weary life at laſt ſtood ſtill.

This ſimile, though pretty, is here improper, becauſe that the ſubject of it was invented very many ages after the characters of this Tragedy exiſted.

OEdip. Oh, let me preſs thee in my youthful arms,
And ſmother my old age in thy embraces.
Yes, *Thebans*, yes, *Jocaſta*, yes, *Adraſtus*,
Old *Polybus*, the king, my father's dead.
Fires ſhall be kindled in th' midſt of *Thebes*;
I' th' midſt of tumult, wars, and peſtilence,
I will rejoice for *Polybus*'s death.
Know, be it known to the limits of the world;
Yet farther, let it paſs yon dazzling roof,
The manſion of the gods, and ſtrike them deaf
With everlaſting peals of thund'ring joy.

Waves all the neighb'ring princes that adore her.

OEdip. Waves all the princes! poor heart! for what?
Oh, ſpeak.

Æge. She, tho' in full-blown flow'r of glorious beauty,
Grows cold, ev'n in the ſummer of her age;
And for your ſake has ſworn to die unmarry'd.

OEdip. How! for my ſake, die, and not marry! Oh,
My fit returns.

Æge. This diamond, with a thouſand kiſſes bleſs'd,
With thouſand ſighs and wiſhes for your ſafety,
She charg'd me give you, with the general homage
Of our *Corinthian* Lords.

OEdip. There's magic in it, take it from my ſight;
There's not a beam it darts, but carries hell,
Hot flaſhing luſt, and necromantic inceſt:
Take it from theſe ſick eyes, Oh, hide it from me.
No, my *Jocaſta*, though *Thebes* caſt me out,
While *Merope's* alive, I'll ne'er return!
Oh, rather let me walk round the wide world
A beggar, than accept a diadem
On ſuch abhorr'd conditions.

Joc. You make, my Lord, your own unhappineſs,
By theſe extravagant and needleſs fears.

OEdip. Needleſs! Oh, all you gods! By heav'n I'd rather
Embrue my hands up to my very ſhoulders
In the dear entrails of the beſt of fathers,
Than offer at the execrable act
Of damn'd inceſt: therefore no more of her.

Æge. And why, Oh, ſacred Sir, if ſubjects may
Preſume to look into their monarch's breaſt,
Why ſhould the chaſte and ſpotleſs *Merope*
Infuſe ſuch thoughts as I muſt bluſh to name?

OEdip. Becauſe the god of *Delphos* did forewarn me,

With

With thundering oracles.

Æge. May I entreat to know them.

OEdip. Yes, my *Egeon*; but the ſad remembrance
Quite blaſts my ſoul: See then the ſwelling prieſt!
Methinks I have his image now in view;
He mounts the Tripos in a minute's ſpace,
His clouded head knocks at the temple-roof,
While from his mouth
Theſe diſmal words are heard:
Fly, wretch, whom Fate has doom'd thy father's blood to ſpill,
And with prepoſt'rous births thy mother's womb to fill.

Æge. Is this the cauſe
Why you refuſe the diadem of *Corinth?*

OEdip. The cauſe? Why, is it not a monſtrous one?

Æge. Great Sir, you may return: And tho' you ſhould
Enjoy the queen (which all the gods forbid)
The act would prove no inceſt.

OEdip. How, *Egeon?*
Though I enjoy'd my mother, not inceſtuous!
Thou rav'ſt, and ſo do I; and theſe all catch †
My madneſs——What, not inceſt with my mother?

Æge. My Lord, queen *Merope* is not your mother.

OEdip. Ha! did I hear thee right? Not *Merope*
My mother!

Æge. Nor was *Polybus* your father.

OEdip. Then all my days and nights muſt now be ſpent
In curious ſearch to find out theſe dark parents
Who gave me to the world; ſpeak then, *Egeon*,
By all the gods celeſtial and infernal,
By all the ties of nature, blood, and friendſhip,
Conceal not from this rack'd deſpairing king

A

† My madneſs; look, they're dead with deep diſtraction.
Not inceſt! What, not inceſt with my mother?

A point, or ſmalleſt grain of what thou know'ſt:
Speak then, Oh, anſwer to my doubts directly.
If royal *Polybus* was not my father,
Why was I call'd his ſon?

Æge. He, from my arms,
Receiv'd you as the faireſt gift of Nature.
Not but you were adorn'd with all the riches
That empire could beſtow in coſtly mantles
Upon its infant heir.

OEdip. But was I made the heir of *Corinth*'s crown,
Becauſe *Egeon*'s hands preſented me?

Æge. By my advice,
Being paſt all hope of children,
He took, embrac'd, and own'd you for his ſon.

OEdip. Perhaps I then am yours; inſtruct me, ſir. ‡
If it be ſo——command my duty then,
And take th'obedience of your new-found offspring.

Æge. You are not mine, nor ought I to be bleſt
With ſuch a god-like offspring. Sir, I found you
Upon the mount *Citheron.* *

OEdip. Oh, ſpeak, ſay on——the valley of *Citheron.*——
Citheron——ſpeak——the valley of *Citheron.* *Æge.*

‡ If it be ſo, I'll kneel and weep before you,
With all th' obedience of a penitent child,
Imploring pardon.
Kill me, if you pleaſe,
I will not writhe my body at the wound:
But ſink upon your feet with a laſt ſigh,
And aſk forgiveneſs with my dying hands.

Æge. Oh, riſe, and call not to this aged cheek
The little blood which ſhould keep warm my heart;

* *OEdip.* Oh, ſpeak, go on, the air grows ſenſible
Of the great things you utter, and is calm:
The hurry'd orbs, with ſtorms ſo rack'd of late,
Seem to ſtand ſtill, as if that *Jove* were talking.

Æge. Oft-times before I thither did reſort,
Charm'd with the converſation of a man
Who led a rural life, and had command
O'er all the ſhepherds, who about thoſe vales
Tended their numerous flocks: In this man's arms
I ſaw you ſmiling at a fatal dagger,
Whoſe point he often offer'd at your throat;
But then you ſmil'd, and then he drew it back,
Then lifted it again, you ſmil'd again;
'Till he at laſt in fury threw it from him,
And cry'd aloud, The gods forbid thy death.
Then I ruſh'd in, and after ſome diſcourſe,
To me he did bequeath your innocent life;
And I the welcome care to *Polybus*.

OEdip. To whom belongs the maſter of the ſhepherds?

Æge. His name I know not, or I have forgot:
That he was of the family of *Laius*,
I well remember.

OEdip. And is your friend alive? for if he be,
I'll buy his preſence, though it coſt my crown.

Æge. Your menial attendants beſt can tell
Whether he lives, or not; and who has now
His place.

Joc. Winds, bear me to ſome barren iſland,
Where print of human feet was never ſeen! † [*Aſide.*

OEdip. If there be any here that knows the perſon
Whom he deſcrib'd, I charge him on his life
To ſpeak; concealment ſhall be ſudden death:
But he who brings him forth, ſhall have reward

Beyond

† O'er-grown with weeds of ſuch a monſtrous height,
Their baleful tops are waſh'd with belly'ng clouds;
Beneath whoſe venomous ſhade I may have vent
For horrors that would blaſt the barbarous world.

Beyond ambition's luſt.

Tir. His name is *Phorbas*;
Jocaſta knows him well; but if I may
Adviſe, reſt where you are, and ſeek no farther.

OEdip. Then all goes well, ſince *Phorbas* is ſecur'd
By my *Jocaſta*. Haſte, and bring him forth:
My love, my queen, give orders. Ha! what mean
Theſe tears, and groans, and ſtrugglings? Speak my fair,
Why are thy troubles?

Joc. Yours; and yours are mine:
Let me conjure you take the prophet's counſel,
And let this *Phorbas* go.

OEdip. Not for the world.
By all the gods, I'll know my birth, though death
Attends the ſearch: I have already paſt
The middle of the ſtream; and to return
Seems greater labour, than to venture o'er.
Therefore produce him.

Joc. Once more, by the gods,
I beg, my *OEdipus*, my lord, my life,
My love, my all, my only, utmoſt hope,
I beg you, baniſh *Phorbas*: Oh, the gods,
I kneel, that you may grant this firſt requeſt.
Deny me all things elſe; but for my ſake,
And as you prize your own eternal quiet,
Never let *Phorbas* come into your preſence.

OEdip. You muſt be rais'd, and *Phorbas* ſhall appear,
Though his dread eyes were baſiliſks. Guards, Haſte,
Search the queen's lodgings: find, and force him hither.
Exeunt Guards.

Joc. Oh, *OEdipus*, yet ſend,
And ſtop their entrance, ere it be too late:
Unleſs you wiſh to ſee *Jocaſta* rent

With furies, ſlain out-right with mere diſtraction,
Keep from your eyes, and mine this dreadful *Phorbas.*
Forbear this ſearch, I'll think you more than mortal.
Will you yet hear me?

OEdip. Tempeſts will be heard,
And waves will daſh, though rocks their baſis keep. ‡——
If thou truly lov'ſt me,
Either forbear this ſubject, or retire. *

Joc. Alas! my Lord. [*Exit* Jocaſta.

OEdip. She's gone; and as ſhe went, methought her eyes
Grew larger, while a thouſand frantic ſpirits
Seething, like riſing bubbles, on the brim,
Peep'd from the watery brink, and glow'd upon me.
I'll ſeek no more; but huſh my genius up,
That throws me on my fate.——Impoſſible!
Oh,

‡ But ſee, they enter. If thou truly lov'ſt me,
Enter Hæmon, *Guards, with* Phorbas.

* *Joc.* Prepare then, wretched prince, prepare to hear
A ſtory, that ſhall turn thee into ſtone.
Could there be hewn a monſtrous gap in nature,
A flaw made through the center, by ſome god,
Through which the groans of ghoſts may ſtrike thy ears,
They will not wound thee as this ſtory will.
Hark, hark! a hollow voice calls out aloud,
Jocaſta! Yes, I'll to the royal bed,
Where firſt the myſteries of our loves were acted,
And double dye it with imperial crimſon;
Tear off this curling hair,
Be gorg'd with fire, ſtab every vital part,
And when at laſt I'm ſlain, to crown the horror,
My poor tormented ghoſt ſhall cleave the ground,
To try if hell can yet more deeply wound. [*Exit.*

* *Jocaſta*'s ſpeech here, or at leaſt the beginning of it, has been tranſferr'd to *Tireſias* in the laſt act, becauſe I thought that it was too long for a perſon in her diſtreſs, and that if ſhe went off the ſtage in this manner (as *Sophocles* has made her retire) the effect would be more moving.

Oh, wretched man, whoſe too, too buſy thoughts
Ride ſwifter than the galloping heav'n's round,
With an eternal hurry of the ſoul!
Nay there's a time when ev'n the rolling year
Seems to ſtand ſtill, dead calms are in the ocean,
When not a breath diſturbs the drowzy waves:
But man, the very monſter of the world,
Is ne'er at reſt, the ſoul for ever wakes.
Come then, ſince Deſtiny thus drives us on,
Let's know the bottom. *Hæmon*, you I ſent:
Where is that *Phorbas?* *

Enter Hæmon, *with* Phorbas *and others.*

Hæm. Here, my royal Lord.

OEdip. Speak firſt, *Ægeon*, ſay, is this the man?

Æge. My Lord, it is: though Time has plough'd that face
With many furrows ſince I ſaw it firſt;
Yet I'm too well acquainted with the ground,
Quite to forget it.

OEdip. Peace! ſtand back a while.
Come hither, friend; I hear thy name is *Phorbas.*
Why doſt thou turn thy face? I charge thee anſwer
To what I ſhall enquire: wert thou not once
The ſervant to king *Laius* here in *Thebes?*

Phor. I was, great Sir, his true and faithful ſervant,
Born and bred up in court, no foreign ſlave.

OEdip. What office hadſt thou? What was thy employment?

Phor. He made me lord of all his rural pleaſures;
For much he lov'd them: Oft I entertain'd

* *OEdipus*, after ſhewing ſuch earneſtneſs to ſpeak with *Phorbas*, would naturally addreſs himſelf to him immediately on his entrance, without indulging his grief in a ſoliloquy, therefore *Phorbas* comes in here.

With ſporting ſwains, o'er whom I had command.

OEdip. Where was thy reſidence? To what part o'th'country
Didſt thou moſt frequently reſort?

Phor. To mount *Cithæron*, and the pleaſant vallies
Which all about lie ſhadowing its large feet.

OEdip. Come forth *Ægeon*. Ha! why ſtart'ſt thou, *Phorbas?*
Forward, I ſay, and face to face confront him; †
Look wiſtly on him——on that man, I ſay,
And tell me on thy life, ſay, doſt thou know him?
Didſt thou e'er ſee him? e'er converſe with him
Near mount *Cithæron?*

Phor. With whom, my Lord, this man?

OEdip. This man, this old, this venerable man:
Speak, didſt thou ever meet him there?

Phor. Where, ſacred Sir?

OEdip. Near mount *Cithæron*; anſwer to the purpoſe, ‡
Didſt thou e'er ſee this man near mount *Cithæron?*

Phor. Moſt ſure, my Lord, I have ſeen lines like thoſe
His viſage bears; but know not where, nor when.

Æge. Is't poſſible you ſhould forget your antient friend?
There are perhaps
Particulars, which may excite your dead remembrance.
Have you forgot I took an infant from you,
Doom'd to be murder'd in a gloomy vale?
The ſwaddling-bands were purple, wrought with gold.
Have you forgot too how you wept, and begg'd
That I would breed him up, and aſk no more?

Phor. Whate'er I begg'd, thou, like a dotard, ſpeak'ſt
More than is requiſite. And what of this?
Why is it mention'd now? And why, Oh, why
Doſt

† Look wiſtly on him, through him, if thou canſt,

‡ 'Tis a king ſpeaks; and royal minutes are
Of much more worth than thouſand vulgar years;

Doſt thou betray the ſecrets of thy friend?

Æge. Be not too raſh. That infant grew at laſt
A King; and here the happy monarch ſtands.

Phor. Ha! whither would'ſt thou? Oh, what haſt thou utter'd!
For what thou'ſt ſaid, death ſtrike thee dumb for ever!

OEdip. Forbear to curſe the innocent; and be *
Accurs'd thyſelf, equivocating ſlave.

Phor. Oh, heav'ns! wherein, my Lord, have I offended?

OEdip. Why ſpeak you not according to my charge?
Bring forth the rack: ſince mildneſs cannot win you,
Torments ſhall force.

Phor. Hold, hold, Oh, dreadful Sir!
You will not rack an innocent old man.

OEdip. Speak then.

Phor. Alas, what would you have me ſay?

OEdip. Did this old man take from your arms an infant?

Phor. He did: and, Oh, I wiſh to all the gods,
Phorbas had periſh'd in that very moment.

OEdip. Moment! Thou ſhalt be hours, days, years, a dying.
Here, bind his hands, he dallies with my fury:
But I ſhall find a way———

Phor. My Lord, I ſaid
I gave the infant to him.

OEdip. Was he thy own, or given thee by another?

Phor. He was not mine; but given me by another.

OEdip. Whence? and from whom? What city? Of what houſe?

Phor. Oh, royal Sir, I bow me to the ground,
Would I could ſink beneath it: By the gods,

* Accurſt thyſelf, thou ſhifting traitor, villain,
Damn'd hypocrite, equivocating ſlave.

I do conjure you to inquire no more.

OEdip. Furies and hell! *Hæmon*, bring forth the rack,
Fetch hither cords, and knives, and ſulphurous flames:
He ſhall be bound, and gaſh'd, his ſkin flead off,
And burnt alive.

Phor. Oh, ſpare my age.

OEdip. Riſe then, and ſpeak.

Phor. Dread Sir, I will.

OEdip. Who gave that infant to thee?

Phor. One of King *Laius'* family.

OEdip. Oh, you immortal gods! But ſay, who was't?
Which of the family of *Laius* gave it?
A ſervant, or one of the royal blood?

Phor. Oh, wretched ſtate! I die, unleſs I ſpeak;
And, if I ſpeak, moſt certain death attends me!

OEdip. Thou ſhalt not die. Speak then, who was it?—
Speak,
While I have ſenſe to underſtand the horror;
For I grow cold.

Phor. The Queen *Jocaſta* told me
It was her ſon by *Laius*.

OEdip. Oh, you gods!—But did ſhe give it thee?

Phor. My Lord, ſhe did.

OEdip. Wherefore? For what?——Oh break not yet
my heart;
Though my eyes burſt, no matter. Wilt thou tell me?
Or, muſt I aſk for ever! for what end,
Why ſhe gave thee her child?

Phor. To murder it.

OEdip. Oh, more than ſavage! murder her own bowels!
Without a cauſe!

Phor. There was a dreadful one,
Which had foretold, that moſt unhappy ſon

Should

Should kill his father, and enjoy his mother.

OEdip. But one thing more.
Jocaſta told me thou wert by the chariot
When the old king was ſlain. Speak, I conjure thee,
For I ſhall never aſk thee ought again,
What was the number of th' aſſaſſinates?

Phor. The dreadful deed was acted but by one;
And ſure that one had much of your reſemblance.

OEdip. 'Tis well! I thank you, gods! 'tis wondrous well!
Daggers, and poiſons! Oh, there is no need
For my diſpatch: and you, you mercileſs pow'rs,
Hoard up your thunder-ſtones; keep, keep your bolts
For crimes of little note. *Falls.*

Adr. Help, *Hæmon*, help, and bow him gently forward,
Chafe, chafe his temples: how the mighty ſpirits †
Struggle for vent! But ſee, he breathes again. ‡

OEdip. Oh, barbarous men, and, Oh, the hated light,
Why did you force me back to curſe the day;
To curſe my friends; to blaſt with this dark breath
The yet untainted earth and circling air?
To raiſe new plagues, and call new vengeance down,
Why did you tempt the gods, and dare to touch me? *
Stand from this ſpot, I wiſh you as my friends,
And come not near me, leſt the gaping earth
Swallow you too——Lo, I am gone already.

[*Draws, and claps his ſword to his breaſt, which* Adraſtus *ſtrikes away with his foot.*

Adr.

† Half ſtrangled with the damp his ſorrows rais'd,

‡ And vigorous nature breaks through oppoſition.
How fares my royal friend?

OEdip. The worſe for you.

* Methinks there's not a hand that graſps this hell,
But ſhould run up like flax all blaſing fire.

Adr. You ſhall no more be truſted with your life:
Creon, Alcander, Hæmon, help to hold him.

OEdip. Cruel *Adraſtus*! Wilt thou, *Hæmon*, too? †
Oh! thou far worſt of my moſt barbarous foes!
Oh, by theſe melting eyes, unus'd to weep,
With all the low ſubmiſſions of a ſlave,
I do conjure thee give my horrors way;
Talk not of life, for that will make me rave:
As well thou may'ſt adviſe a tortur'd wretch,
All mangled o'er from head to foot with wounds,
And his bones broke, to wait a better day.

Adr. My Lord, you aſk me things impoſſible;
And I with juſtice ſhould be thought your foe,
To leave you in this tempeſt of your ſoul.

Tir. Tho' baniſh'd *Thebes*, in *Corinth* you may reign;
Th' infernal pow'rs themſelves exact no more:
Calm then your rage, and once more ſeek the gods. ‡

OEdip.

† Are theſe the obligations of my friends?
Oh, worſe than worſt of my moſt barbarous foes!
Dear, dear *Adraſtus*, look with half an eye
On my unheard-of woes, and judge thyſelf,
If it be fit that ſuch a wretch ſhould live!

‡ *OEdip.* I'll have no more to do with gods, nor men!
Hence, from my arms, avaunt. Enjoy thy mother!
What, violate, with beſtial appetite,
The ſacred veils that wrapt thee yet unborn!
This is not to be borne! Hence: off, I ſay;
For they who let my vengeance, make themſelves
Accomplices in my moſt horrid guilt.
Adr. Let it be ſo: we'll fence Heav'n's fury from you,
And ſuffer all together: this, perhaps,
When ruin comes, may help to break your fall.
OEdip. Oh, that, as oft I have at *Athens* ſeen
The ſtage ariſe, and the big clouds deſcend;
So now in very deed I might behold

The

OEdip. Does he preach calmneſs?—Oh!—I ſhall go mad—
I am already ſo——my brain's on fire,
Come darkneſs then, and everlaſting night
Shadow the globe!——may the ſun never dawn,
The ſilver moon be blotted from her orb!
This pond'rous earth, and all yon marble ſky †
Meet like the hand of *Jove* to cruſh mankind!——
And all the elements in fervent heat,
With dreadful noiſe diſſolve, and paſs away!
Oh, how I'm charm'd!——what beautiful diſorder!
Stop, ſtop that cloud!—I'll up—and ſtride the blaſt—
Let me be plac'd amid this wreck of nature,
Behold the chaos of conflicting matter——
Admire the tumult, and applaud the gods!
Then——O ye powers——(if pity dwells on high)
At length with me your dreadful ruin cloſe,
With thought and being, end at once my woes!

Exit.

END of ACT the Fourth.

The pond'rous earth, and all yon marble roof †
Meet, like the hand of *Jove*, and cruſh mankind!
For all the elements, and all the pow'rs
Celeſtial, nay, terreſtrial, and infernal,
Conſpire the rack of out-caſt *OEdipus*.
Full darkneſs then, and everlaſting night
Shadow the globe; may the ſun never dawn,
The ſilver moon be blotted from her orb;
And for an univerſal rout of nature
Through all the inmoſt chambers of the ſky,
May there not be a glimpſe, one ſtarry ſpark,
But gods meet gods, and juſtle in the dark;
That jars may riſe, and wrath divine be hurl'd,
Which may to atoms ſhake the ſolid world. [*Exeunt.*

† The three preceding lines are omitted, becauſe the *Greeks* had no Theatre till long after the time of *OEdipus*.

ACT V.

Enter Creon, Alcander, *and* Pyracmon.

CREON.

THEBES is at length my own; and all my wishes,
(Which sure were great as royalty e'er form'd)
Fortune and my auspicious stars have crown'd. *

Pyr. Might I be counsellor, I would intreat you
To cool a little, Sir——————
Find out *Eurydice*;
And with the resolution of a man
Mark'd out for greatness, give the fatal choice
Of death or marriage.

Alc. See curst *OEdipus*,
As one who tho' unfortunate, belov'd,
Thought innocent, and therefore much lamented
By all the *Thebans*: you must mark him dead:
Since nothing but his death, not banishment,
Can give assurance to your doubtful reign.

Cre. Well have you done, to snatch me from the storm
Of racking transport, where the little streams
Of love, revenge, and all the under passions,
Were quite devour'd in the vast gulph of empire;
Therefore, *Pyracmon*, as you boldly urg'd,
Eurydice shall die, or be my bride.
Alcander, summon to their master's aid
My menial servants, and all those whom change
Of state and hope of the new monarch's favour,

Can

* O diadem, thou centre of ambition,
Where all its different lines are reconcil'd,
As if thou wert the burning-glass of glory!

Can wish to take our part, Away! What now?

[*Exit* Alcander.

Enter Hæmon. *

Hæm. Is't poſſible you ſhould be ignorant
Of what has happen'd to the deſperate king? ‡

Cre. Tell thy diſmal ſtory.

Hæm. Thrice he ſtruck,
With all his force, his hollow groaning breaſt,
And thus, with out-cries, to himſelf complain'd: †
No parricide; if thou muſt weep, weep blood;
Weep eyes inſtead of tears: O, by the gods,
'Tis greatly thought, he cry'd, and fits my woes.
Which ſaid, he ſmil'd revengefully, and leapt
Upon the floor; thence gazing at the ſkies,

* When *Hæmon* weeps, without the help of ghoſts,
I may foretel there is a fatal cauſe.

‡ *Cre.* I know no more but that he was conducted
Into his cloſet, where I ſaw him fling
His trembling body on the royal bed.
All left him there, at his deſire, alone;
But ſure no ill, unleſs he dy'd with grief,
Could happen, for you bore his ſword away.
Hæm. I did; and having lock'd the door, I ſtood;
And through a chink I found, not only heard,
But ſaw him, when he thought no eye beheld him;
At firſt deep ſighs heav'd from his woeful heart
Murmurs, and groans that ſhook the outward rooms.
And art thou ſtill alive, O wretch! he cry'd:
Then groan'd again, as if his ſorrowful ſoul
Had crack'd the ſtrings of life, and burſt away.

† But thou can'ſt weep then, and thou think'ſt 'tis well.
Theſe bubbles of the ſhalloweſt, emptieſt ſorrow,
Which children vent for toys, and women rain
For any trifle their fond hearts are ſet on;
Yet theſe thou think'ſt are ample ſatisfaction
For bloodieſt murder, and for burning luſt;

His eye-balls fiery red, and glowing vengeance; †
Gods, I accuſe you not, but take, he cry'd,
Take, eyes, your laſt, your fatal farewel-view; ‡
And ſudden lifting both his furious hands,
He ſnatch'd, he tore, from forth their bloody orbs,
The balls of ſight, and daſh'd them on the ground.

Cre. A maſter-piece of horror; new and dreadful!

Hæm. I ran to ſuccour him; but, oh! too late;
For he had pluck'd the remnant ſtrings away.
What then remains, but that I find *Tireſias*,
Who, with his wiſdom, may allay thoſe furies
That haunt his gloomy ſoul? [*Exit.*

Cre. Heav'n will reward
Thy care, moſt honeſt, faithful, fooliſh *Hæmon!*
But ſee, *Alcander* enters, well attended.

Enter Alcander, *attended.*

I ſee thou haſt been diligent.

Alc. Nothing theſe,
For number, to the crowds that ſoon will follow;
Be reſolute,
And call your utmoſt fury to revenge.

Cre. Ha! thou haſt given
Th' alarm to cruelty; and never may
Theſe eyes be clos'd, till they behold *Adraſtus*
Stretch'd at the feet of falſe *Eurydice.*
But ſee, they're here? retire a while, and mark.

Enter Adraſtus *and* Eurydice, *attended.*

Adr. Alas, *Eurydice*, what fond raſh man, *

That

† Gods, I accuſe you not, tho' I no more
Will view your heav'n, till with more durable glaſſes,
The mighty ſoul's immortal perſpectives,
I find your dazzling beings: take he cry'd,

‡ Then with a groan, that ſeem'd the call of death,
With horrid force lifting his impious hands,

* What inconſiderate and ambitious fool,

That ſhall hereafter read the fate of *OEdipus*,
Will dare, with his frail hand, to graſp a ſceptre?
Eur. 'Tis true, a crown ſeems dreadful, and I wiſh
That you and I, more lowly plac'd, might paſs
Our ſofter hours in humble cells away:
Not but I love you to that infinite height,
I could (O wond'rous proof of fierceſt love!)
Be greatly wretched in a court with you.
Adr. Take then this moſt lov'd innocence away:
Fly from tumultuous *Thebes*, from blood and murder;
Fly from the author of all villanies,
Rapes, death and treaſon; from that fury *Creon*.
Vouchſafe that I, o'er-joy'd, may bear you hence,
And at your feet preſent the crown of *Argos*.
[Creon *and Attendants come up to him.*
Cre. I have o'er-heard thy black deſign, *Adraſtus*,
And therefore, as a traitor to this ſtate,
Death ought to be thy lot: let it ſuffice
That *Thebes* ſurveys thee as a prince; abuſe not
Her proffer'd mercy, but retire betimes,
Leſt ſhe repent, and haſten on thy doom.
Adr. Think not, moſt abject,
Moſt abhorr'd of men,
Adraſtus will vouchſafe to anſwer thee.
Thebans, to you I juſtify my love:
I have addreſt my love to this fair princeſs;
But, if I ever meant a violence,
Or thought to raviſh, as that traitor did,
What humbleſt adorations could not win,
Brand me, you gods, blot me with foul diſhonour,
And let men curſe me by the name of *Creon!*
Eur. Hear me, O *Thebans*, if you dread the wrath
Of her whom fate ordain'd to be your queen;

Hear

Hear me, and dare not, as you prize your lives,
To take the part of that rebellious traitor.
By the decree of royal *OEdipus*,
By queen *Jocasta's* order, by what's more,
My own dear vows of everlasting love,
I here resign to prince *Adrastus'* arms
All that the world can make me mistress of.

Cre. O, perjur'd woman!
Draw all! and when I give the word fall on,
Traitor, resign the princess, or this moment
Expect, with all those most unfortunate wretches,
Upon this spot straight to be hewn in pieces.

Adr. No, villain, no;
With twice those odds of men,
I doubt not in this cause to vanquish thee.
Captain, remember to your care I give
My love, ten thousand thousand times to me more dear
Than life or liberty.

Cre. Fall on, *Alcander*.
Pyracmon, you and I must wheel about
For nobler game, the princess.

Adr. Ah, traitor, dost thou shun me!
Follow, follow,
My brave companions, see the cowards fly.

[*Exeunt fighting:* Creon's *party beaten off by* Adrastus.

Enter OEdipus.

OEdip. O, 'tis too little this, thy loss of sight, †
For tho' corporeal light be lost for ever,
I have not hid my sorrows from myself!
The bright reflecting soul in inward view
Presents to my fancy her black ideas, ‡

Where

† What has it done? I shall be gaz'd at now
The mobe; be pointed at, There goes the monster!
Nor have I hid my horrors from myself;

‡ ——————With glaring optics

Prefents

Where ſons and brothers——ſiſters, daughters, both
By fancy mix'd, fly round my whirling brain——
O gods! gods, anſwer; is there any means?
Let me go mad, or die.

Enter Jocaſta.

Joc. Where, where is this moſt wretched of mankind, †
Whoſe ſtory told, whoſe very name but mention'd,
Would cool the rage of fevers, and unlock
The hand of luſt from the pale virgin's hair,
And throw the raviſher before her feet?

OEdip. By all my fears, I think *Jocaſta*'s voice! *
Hence; fly; begone.

Joc.

Preſents in larger ſize her black ideas,
Doubling the bloody proſpects of my crimes:
Holds fancy down, and makes her act again,
With wife and mother. Tortures, hell and furies!
Ha! now the baleful offspring's brought to light!
In horrid form they rank themſelves before me;
What ſhall I call this medley of creation?
Here's one, with all th' obedience of a ſon,
Borrowing *Jocaſta*'s look, kneels at my feet,
And calls me father; there a ſturdy boy,
Reſembling *Laius* juſt as when I kill'd him,
Bears up, and with his cold hand graſping mine,
Cries out, how fares my brother *OEdipus*?
What, ſons and brothers! Siſters and daughters too!
Fly all, begone, fly from my whirling brain;
Hence, inceſt, murder; hence, you ghaſtly figures!

† This ſtately image of imperial ſorrow,

* Hence; fly; begone. O thou far worſe than worſt
Of damning charmers! O abhorr'd, loath'd creature!
Fly, by the gods, or by the fiends, I charge thee,
Far as the eaſt, weſt, north, or ſouth of heav'n;
But think not thou ſhalt ever enter there:
The golden gates are barr'd with adamant,
'Gainſt thee, and me; and the celeſtial guards,
Still as we riſe, will daſh our ſpirits down.

Joc. O wretched pair! O greatly wretched me! †

OEdip. Art thou not gone then? ha!
How dar'ſt thou ſtand the fury of the gods?
Or com'ſt thou in the grave to reap new pleaſures?

Joc. Talk on; till thou mak'ſt mad my boiling brain; ‡
Methinks, at ſuch a meeting, Heav'n ſtands ſtill;
The ſea nor ebbs nor flows: This mole-hill earth
Is heav'd no more: The buſy emmets ceaſe:
Yet hear me on——

OEdip. Speak then, and blaſt my ſoul.

Joc. O, my lov'd Lord, tho' I reſolve a ruin
To match my crimes; by all my miſeries,
'Tis horror, worſe than thouſand thouſand deaths,
To ſend me hence without a kind farewel.

OEdip. Gods, how ſhe ſhakes me! Stay thee, O *Jocaſta.*
Speak ſomething ere thou goeſt for ever from me.

Joc. 'Tis woman's weakneſs, that I ſhould be pity'd;
Pardon me then, O greateſt, tho' moſt wretched
Of all thy kind! My ſoul is on the brink,
And ſees the boiling furnace juſt beneath:
Do not thou puſh me off, and I will go,
With ſuch a willingneſs, as if that Heav'n
With all its glories glow'd for my reception.

OEdip. O, in my heart, I feel the pangs of nature;
It works with kindneſs o'er: Give, give me my way; *
Direct

† Two worlds of woe!

‡ Groan ſtill more death; and may thoſe diſmal ſources
Still bubble on, and pour forth blood and tears.

* I feel a melting here, a tenderneſs,
Too mighty for the anger of the gods!
Direct me to thy knees: yet Oh forbear,
Leſt the dead embers ſhould revive.
Stand off——and at juſt diſtance
Let me groan my horrors——here I will

On

Direct me to thy knees:
Here let me ſob my ſorrows till I burſt,
Here ſigh and languiſh out my wounded ſoul.

Joc. In ſpight of all thoſe crimes the cruel gods
Can charge me with, I know my innocence;
Know yours: 'Tis Fate alone that makes us wretched,
For you are ſtill my huſband.

OEdip. Swear I am,
And I'll believe thee; ſteal into thy arms, †
Renew endearments——chaſte as ſpirits' joys.
——Gently I'll come——and fold thee to my breaſt.

Joc. Begone, my Lord! Alas, what are we doing!
Fly from my arms! Whirlwinds, ſeas, continents,
And worlds divide us! Oh, thrice happy thou,
Who haſt no uſe of eyes; for here's a ſight
Would turn the melting face of Mercy's ſelf
To a wild fury.

OEdip. Ha! what ſeeſt thou there?

Joc. The ſpirit of my huſband! Oh, the gods!
How wan he looks!

OEdip. Thou rav'ſt; thy huſband's here.

Joc. There, there he mounts
In circling fire among the bluſhing clouds!
And ſee, he waves *Jocaſta* from the world! ‡

On the earth, here blow my utmoſt gale;
Here ſob my ſorrows, till I burſt with ſighing;
Here gaſp and languiſh out my wounded ſoul.

† Renew endearments, think them no pollutions,
But chaſte as ſpirits' joys: gently I'll come,
Thus weeping blind, like dewy night upon thee,
And fold thee ſoftly in my arms to ſlumber.

[*The ghoſt of* Laius *aſcends by degrees, pointing at* Jocaſta.

‡ *Ghoſt.* *Jocaſta, OEdipus.* [*He vaniſhes with thunder.*

OEdip. What would'ſt thou have?
Thou know'ſt I cannot come to thee, detain'd
In darkneſs here, and kept from means of death.
I've heard a ſpirit's force is wonderful;
At whoſe reproach, when ſtarting from his dungeon,
The earth does ſhake, and the old ocean groans,
Rocks are remov'd, and tow'rs are thunder'd down:
And walls of braſs, and gates of adamant
Are paſſable as air, and fleet like winds.

Joc. Was that a raven's croak, or my ſon's voice?
No matter which; I'll to the grave and hide me: *
Earth open!
Hark!

OEdip. Strike then, imperial ghoſt; daſh all at once
This houſe of clay into a thouſand pieces;
That my poor ling'ring ſoul may take her flight
To your immortal dwellings.

Joc. Haſte thee then,
Or I ſhall be before thee: ſee thou canſt not
Then I will tell thee that my wings are on:
I'll mount, I'll fly, and with a port divine
Glide all along the gaudy milky ſoil,
To find my *Laius* out: aſk every god
In his bright palace, if he knows my *Laius?*
My murder'd *Laius!*

OEdip. Ha! how's this, *Jocaſta?*
Nay, if thy brain be ſick, then thou art happy.

Joc. Ha! will you not? Shall I not find him out?
Will you not ſhew him? Are my tears deſpis'd? †

My

* Earth, open, or I'll tear thy bowels up.
Hark! he goes on, and blabs the deed of inceſt.

† Why, then I'll thunder; yes, I will be mad,
And fright you with my cries; yes, cruel gods,

Though

My dear, my murder'd Lord! Oh, *Laius!* [*Exit.*

OEdip. Excellent grief! why, this is as it ſhould be!
No mourning can be ſuitable to crimes
Like ours, but what death makes, or madneſs forms.
I could have wiſh'd, methought, for ſight again,
To mark the gallantry of her diſtraction;
Her blazing eyes darting the wand'ring ſtars,
T'have ſeen her mouth the heaven's, and mate the gods,
While with her thund'ring voice ſhe menac'd high,
And every accent twang'd with ſmarting ſorrow;
But what's all this to thee? Thou, coward, yet
Art living, canſt not, wilt not find the road
To the great palace of magnificent death;
Though thouſand ways lead to his thouſand doors,
Which day and night are ſtill unbarr'd for all.

[*Claſhing of ſwords is heard without.*

Hark! 'tis the noiſe of claſhing ſwords! the ſound
Comes near: Oh, that a battle would come o'er me!
If I but graſp a ſword, or wreſt a dagger,
I'll make a ruin with the firſt that falls.

Enter Hæmon, *with Guards,* Tireſias, *and others.*

Hæm. Seize him, and bear him to the weſtern tow'r.
Pardon me, ſacred Sir; I am inform'd
That *Creon* has deſigns upon your life:
Forgive me then, if, to preſerve you from him,
I order your confinement.

Though vultures, eagles, dragons tear my heart,
I'll ſnatch celeſtial flames, fire all your dwellings,
Melt down your golden roofs, and make your doors
Of cryſtal fly from off their diamond hinges;
Drive you all out from your ambroſial hives,
To ſwarm like bees about the field of heav'n:
This will I do, unleſs you ſhew me *Laius.*

OEdip. Slaves, unhand me. ‡
Yet, cruel *Hæmon*, think not I will live;
He that could tear his eyes out, ſure can find
Some deſperate way to ſtifle this curs'd breath.
Or if I ſtarve! but that's a ling'ring fate;
Or if I leave my brains upon the wall!
The airy ſoul can eaſily o'er-ſhoot
Thoſe bounds with which thou ſtriv'ſt to pale her in?
Yes, I will periſh in deſpight of thee. *

Hæm. Tireſias, after him; and with your counſel
Adviſe him humbly; charm, if poſſible,
Theſe feuds within: while I without extinguiſh,
Or periſh in th' attempt, the furious *Creon*;
That brand which ſets our city in a flame.

Tir. Heav'n proſper your intent, and give a period
To all our plagues: what old *Tireſias* can,
Shall ſtraight be done. Lead *Manto* to the tow'r.
[*Exeunt* Man. Tir. *&c.*

Hæm. Follow me all, and help to part this fray,
[*Trumpets again.*
Or fall together in the bloody broil. [*Exeunt.*

Enter Creon *with* Eurydice, Pyracmon, *and his party, giving ground to* Adraſtus.

Cre. Hold, hold your arms, *Adraſtus*, prince of *Argos*,
Hear, and behold; *Eurydice* is my priſoner.

Adr. What wouldſt thou, hell-hound?

Cre. See this brandiſh'd dagger:
Forego th' advantage which thy arms have won,
Or, by the blood which trembles through the heart

Of

‡ I think thou haſt a ſword: 'twas the wrong ſide.

* And, by the rage that ſtirs me, if I meet thee
In th' other world I'll curſe thee for this uſage.

Of her whom more than life I know thou lov'ſt,
I'll bury to the haft, in her fair breaſt,
This inſtrument of my revenge.

Adr. Stay thee, damn'd wretch: hold, ſtop thy bloody hand.

Cre. Give order then, that on this inſtant, now,
This moment, all thy ſoldiers ſtraight diſband.

Adr. Away, my friends, ſince Fate has ſo allotted;
Begone, and leave me to the villain's mercy.

Eur. Ah, my *Adraſtus!* call 'em, call 'em back!
Stand there; come back, O, cruel, barbarous men!
Could you then leave your lord, your prince, your king,
To periſh by the hand of this baſe villain,
After ſo bravely having fought his cauſe?
Why rather ruſh you not at once together
All to his ruin? drag him through the ſtreets,
Hang his contageous quarters on the gates;
Nor let my death affright you.

Cre. Die firſt thyſelf then.

Adr. O, I charge thee hold.
Hence from my preſence all: he's not my friend
That diſobeys: ſee, art thou now appeas'd?

[*Exeunt Attendants.*

Or is there ought elſe yet remains to do,
That can atone thee? ſlack thy thirſt of blood
With mine: but ſave, O ſave that innocent wretch.

Cre. Forego thy ſword, and yield thyſelf my priſoner.

Eur. Yet while there's any dawn of hope to ſave
Thy precious life, my dear *Adraſtus*,
Whate'er thou doſt, deliver not thy ſword;
With that thou may'ſt get off, tho' odds oppoſe thee:
For me, O fear not; no, he dares not touch me;
His horrid love will ſpare me. Keep thy ſword. †

Adr.

† Leſt I be raviſh'd after thou art ſlain.

Adr. Inſtruct me, gods, what ſhall *Adraſtus* do?

Cre. Do what thou wilt, when ſhe is dead: my ſoldiers
With numbers will o'er-pow'r thee. Is't thy wiſh
Eurydice ſhould fall before thee?

Adr Traitor, no. ‡

Cre. Then caſt thy ſword away,
And yield thee to my mercy, or I ſtrike.

Adr. Hold thy rais'd arm; give me a moment's pauſe.
My father, when he bleſt me, gave me this;
My ſon, ſaid he, let this be thy laſt refuge;
If thou forego'ſt it, miſery attends thee:
Yet love now charms it from me; which in all
The hazards of my life I never loſt.
'Tis thine, my faithful ſword; my only truſt;
Though my heart tells me, that the gift is fatal.

Cre. Fatal! yes; fooliſh, love-ſick prince, it ſhall;
Thy arrogance, thy ſcorn,
My wound's remembrance,
Turn, all at once, the fatal point upon thee.
Pyracmon, to the palace, and diſpatch
The king: hang *Hæmon* up; for he is loyal,
And will oppoſe me. Come, Sir, are you ready?

Adr. Yes, villain, for whatever thou canſt dare.

Eur. Hold, *Creon*! or thro' me, thro' me you wound.

Adr. Off, Madam, or we periſh both. Behold,
I'm not unarm'd; my poignard's in my hand;
Therefore, away—— *Eur.*

‡ Better that thou, and I, and all mankind,
Should be no more.

This ſcene ſavours of romance, but it is too ſpirited to be omitted. By romance I mean not the publications of this age under that appellation, but the ſerious, and high-flown works from Madame *Scudery's* pen, which amus'd the world in folio volumes of *Caſſandra*, *Cleopatra* &c. about the time of this tragedy.

Eur. I'll guard your life with mine.

Cre. Die both, then; there is now no time for dallying.
[*Kills* Eurydice.

Eur. Ah, prince, farewell! farewell, my dear *Adraſtus*.
[*Dies.*

Adr. Unheard-of monſter! eldeſt-born of hell!
Down to thy primitive flame. [*Stabs* Creon.

Cre. Help, ſoldiers, help!
Revenge me!

Adr. More, yet more; a thouſand wounds!
I'll ſtab thee ſtill, thus, to the gaping furies.
[Adraſtus *falls, killed by the ſoldiers.*

Enter Hæmon, *Guards, with* Alcander *and* Pyracmon *bound; the aſſaſſins are driven off.*

Oh, *Hæmon*, I am ſlain! nor need I name
Th' inhuman author of all villanies;
There he lies, gaſping.

Cre. If I muſt plunge in flames,
Burn firſt my arm; baſe inſtrument, unfit
To act the dictates of my daring mind.
Burn, burn for ever, Oh, weak ſubſtitute
Of that, the god, Ambition! [*Dies.*

Adr. She's gone—Oh, deadly markſman! in the heart!
Yet in the pangs of death ſhe graſps my hand:
Her lips, too, tremble, as if ſhe would ſpeak
Her laſt farewell. Oh, *OEdipus*, thy fall
Is great! and nobly now thou go'ſt attended.
They talk of heroes, and celeſtial beauties,
And wond'rous pleaſures in the other world:
Let me but find her there; I aſk no more. [*Dies.*

Enter a Captain to Hæmon, *with* Tireſias *and* Manto.

Cap. Oh, Sir, the queen, *Jocaſta*, ſwift and wild,
Has a robb'd tygreſs bounding o'er the plain, ‡

Has

‡ It is in the original *o'er the woods.*

Has acted murders that amaze mankind.
In twiſted gold I ſaw her daughters hang
On the bed royal, and her little ſons
Stabb'd through their breaſts upon the bloody pillows. *

Hæm. But ſee, the furious, mad *Jocaſta*'s here.

SCENE *draws, and diſcovers* Jocaſta *held by her women, and ſtabbed in many places of her boſom, her hair diſhevelled, her children ſlain upon the bed.*

Was ever yet a ſight of ſo much horror
And pity brought to view!

Joc. Ah, cruel women!
Will you not let me take my laſt farewell
Of thoſe dear babes? Oh, let me run and ſeal
My melting ſoul upon your bubbling wounds!
I'll print upon their coral mouths ſuch kiſſes,
As ſhall recall their wand'ring ſpirits home.
Let me go, let me go, or I will tear you piece-meal.
Help, *Hæmon*, help!
Help, *OEdipus!* help, gods! *Jocaſta* dies!

Enter OEdipus *above.*

OEdip. I've found a window, and, I thank the gods,
'Tis quite unbarr'd. Sure, by the diſtant noiſe,
It's height will fit my fatal purpoſe well.

Joc. What, hoa, my *OEdipus!* See where he ſtands!
His groping ghoſt is lodg'd upon a tow'r,
Nor can it find the road. Mount, mount, my ſoul! †

I'll

* *Hæm.* Relentleſs Heav'ns! Is then the fate of *Laius*
Never to be aton'd. How ſacred ought
Kings lives be held, when but the death of one
Demands an empire's blood for expiation!

This reflection was probably ſuggeſted to the author by his vicinity to the time when Charles I. was beheaded.

† I'll wrap thy ſhiv'ring ſpirit in lambent flames; and ſo we'll fall.
But ſee, we're landed on the happy coaſt;

I'll wrap thy ſhiv'ring ſoul in lambent flames,
And ſo we'll ſail together———
Through the vaſt void of air———
But ſee, we're landed on the happy coaſt,
And all the golden ſtrands are cover'd o'er
With glorious gods that come to try our cauſe.
Jove, *Jove*, whoſe majeſty now ſinks me down,
He who himſelf burns in unlawful fires, ‡
Shall judge, and ſhall acquit us. Oh! [*She dies.*

OEdip. Speak, *Hæmon*, what has Fate been doing there?
What dreadful deed has mad *Jocaſta* done?

Hæm. The Queen herſelf, and all your wretched offspring,
Are by her fury ſlain.

OEdip. By all my woes,
She has outdone me in revenge and murder;
And I ſhall envy her the ſad applauſe:
But, Oh, my children! Oh, what have they done? †

OEdip. *Jocaſta*, lo, I come! *
Swift as a flying meteor.

[*He throws himſelf out of the window. The* Thebans *gather about his body.*

‡ Shall judge, and ſhall acquit us. Oh, 'tis done!
'Tis fix'd by Fate upon record divine;
And *OEdipus* ſhall now be ever mine.

† This was not like the mercy of the heav'ns,
To ſet her madneſs on ſuch cruelty.
This ſtirs me more than all my ſufferings,
And with my laſt breath I muſt call you tyrants.

* Oh, *Laius*, *Labdacus*, and all you ſpirits
Of the *Cadmean* race, prepare to meet me!
All weeping, rang'd along the gloomy ſhore,
Extend your arms t' embrace me; for I come.
May all the gods, too, from their battlements,

Behold,

Hæm. Oh, prophet! *OEdipus* is now no more!
Oh, curs'd effect of the most-deep despair!

Tir. Ceaſe your complaints, and bear his body hence;
The dreadful ſight will daunt the drooping *Thebans*,
Whom Heaven decrees to raiſe with peace and glory.
Yet, by theſe terrible examples warn'd,
The ſacred Fury thus alarms the world,
Let none, howe'er ſo virtuous, great, or high,
Be judg'd entirely bleſs'd before they die.

[*Exeunt.*

FINIS.

Behold, and wonder at a mortal's daring:
And when I knock the goal of dreadful death,
Shout, and applaud me with a clap of thunder.
Once more, thus wing'd by horrid Fate, I come
Swift as a falling meteor; lo, I fly,
And thus go downwards, to the darker ſky.

Mr. DRYDEN's EPILOGUE.

WHAT *Sophocles* could undertake alone,
Our poets found a work for more than one;
And therefore two lay tugging at the piece,
With all their force, to draw the pond'rous maſs from *Greece*.
A weight that bent ev'n *Seneca's* ſtrong muſe,
And which *Corneille's* ſhoulders did refuſe.
So hard it is th'*Athenian* harp to ſtring;
So much two conſuls yield to one juſt king.
Terror and pity this whole poem ſway;
The mightieſt machines that can mount a play.
How heavy will thoſe vulgar ſouls be found,
Whom two ſuch engines cannot move from ground!
When *Greece* and *Rome* have ſmil'd upon this birth,
You can but damn for one poor ſpot of earth;
And when your children find your judgment ſuch,
They'll ſcorn their Sires, and wiſh themſelves born *Dutch*:
Each haughty poet will infer with eaſe,
How much his wit muſt underwrite to pleaſe.
As ſome ſtrange churl would brandiſhing advance
The monumental ſword that conquer'd *France*;
So you, by judging this, your judgment teach,
Thus far you like, that is, thus far you reach.
Since, then, the vote of full two thouſand years
Has crown'd this plot, and all the dead are theirs,
Think it a debt you pay, not alms you give,
And, in your own defence, let this play live.
Think them not vain, when *Sophocles* is ſhown;
To praiſe his worth, they humbly doubt their own.
Yet as weak ſtates each other's pow'r aſſure,
Weak poets by conjunction are ſecure:
Their treat is what your palates reliſh moſt,
Charm, ſong, a ſhew, a murder, and a ghoſt!
We know not what you can deſire or hope,
To pleaſe you more, but burning of a *Pope*.

MR. DRYDEN'S EPILOGUE.

WHAT Sophocles could undertake alone,
Our poets found a work for more than one;
And therefore two lay tugging at the piece,
With all their force, to draw the pond'rous mass from Greece.
A weight that bent ev'n Samp'son's strong male,
And which Corneille's thunders did not shake.
So hard it is the Athenian harp to string;
So much two consuls yield to one just king.
Terror and pity this whole poem sway;
The mighties machines that can mount a play.
How heavy will those vulgar tools be found,
When two such engines cannot move from ground!
When Greece and Rome have thrill'd upon this breath,
You can but damn for one poor foot of earth;
And when your children find your judgment such,
They'll scorn their sires, and with themselves burn Dutch:
Each bawdy poet will inter with gale,
How much his wit must underwrite to please.
As some strange tongue [illegible] unbidding advance
The monumental towns that conquer'd France;
So you, by judging this, your judgment teach,
Thus far you like, that is, thus far you reach.
Since, then, the vote of full two thousand years
Has crown'd this plot, and all the dead are theirs,
Think it a debt you pay, not alms you give,
And, in your own defence, let this play live.
Think them not vain, when Sophocles is shown;
To publish his worth, they humbly doubt their own.
Yet as weak liars each other's pow'r allure,
Weak poets by conjunction are secure:
Their scant is what your palates relish most,
Charm, song, a show, a murder, and a ghost!
We know not what you can dislike or hope,
To please your more, but purging of a Pope.